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Seed
of the
Puritan

SEED of the PURITAN

by
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Author of
Not For the Meek

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NOTE TO THE READER

With the exception of the President of the United States, and certain people of international importance passingly mentioned, the characters of this book are fictional. Any resemblance they may have to any persons living or dead is wholly coincidental. This statement as applied here is more than ordinarily important. It is in most cases a mere legal precaution, but here it is designed to warn the reader that he will be wasting his time if he attempts to fit the characters of this novel into the pattern of public figures of the day. The world incidents used in this book are historically correct, but local ones are not. The New England factory town of Josiah Madden's early days is representative of such towns, and the big city of his later period is representative of such cities. But these settings, like the characters, are fictional.

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1.

LEF—right—left—right! “Over there—over there. . . . And we’ll all—be—back—when it’s over—over there!”

They weren’t all back of course. A good many of them would never be back. Just the tough ones and the lucky ones and those who through no fault of their own had not penetrated to the line of battle. . . . But Josiah Madden was back, being both tough and lucky. And, from that welter of blood and fire some hard casing in his being had melted and released the Josiah of his future.

It was in 1917 that Josiah had enlisted in the army. He made an excellent top sergeant. In fact he returned from France a hero. There were men who were wrecked by the war both in mind and body but for him it constituted an opportunity. It filled him with a beautiful dissatisfaction, a restlessness of spirit which he had not known earlier. The light blue ribbon sprinkled with stars was but a symbol of the real award he had obtained.

It had never seemed to him such a remarkable feat, exterminating a whole gun nest of Germans single-handed. He had figured out how to get them and he had got them and had a good time doing it. It was the first rare adventure of a man not too much given to adventure. Josiah did not normally care for violence.

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The sight of mangled bodies struck him with a sense of waste if not of pity. He hated waste. But this little massacre was his own private business, and not achieved in a spirit of recklessness at all, and still less in that selfless exaltation which leads men to valor. He himself might have been killed. He thought afterwards that he hadn't sufficiently taken into account this possibility, though the heady perfume of his own danger had doubtless added to the occasion.

He was genuinely surprised at the acclaim he received. His exploit was his own and it was for him an admission of weakness to be served up in an artificial effulgence like a mannequin in a shop window. But in marching along the route set for the parade he was blessed at least with the anonymity of numbers. It was a bleak April day, and the governors of five states stood waiting in the bleakness while Josiah and his Yankee division passed by. He knew then what he wanted. These dignified silk-hatted figures were men no better than himself—not as good perhaps. He was not impressed by them. But suddenly he was impressed by himself. He could move such men, he could place them where they were. He saw himself as the player at the little chessboard sitting in that ivory silence to which chess players are prone, and moving such men as these across the board. It would take time. It might take a lifetime but it was something to figure on. It would have seemed to most young men an ambition somewhat fabulous but to Josiah it seemed far more natural than remaining as the superintendent of a factory in a factory town.

These governors were considered great men. Maybe

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some of them had a real claim to greatness. You didn't get to be governor of a state unless you had something beneath your fine silk hat besides hair. Some of them had come up the hard way and none of them were what you could call failures. Josiah despised failure. He had seen it at pretty close range during all his formative years. He had left school because of it at the age of twelve, and it would have been useful to have had an education—to have studied law perhaps. The law was the key to a good many doors, and being denied such a key was something Josiah neither forgot nor forgave. Possessing though he did certain of the Christian virtues, forgiveness was not among them. He had never forgiven his father and he never would.

The elder Madden had brought to his own worthlessness all the thoroughness of his New England ancestry. It wasn't just casual. If Mrs. Madden had married someone else everything would have been different. But in such case Josiah would not have been Josiah. Physically he resembled his father. In fact it was often remarked how odd it was that two people could look so much alike and be so different. If they'd been horses they would have been a team perfectly matched in size and color, though it would have been the son who pulled the load. Tall and lank, they had walked in the same way. They had sat in the same way, crossing one long thin leg over the other and resting almost on the small of their backs, though the son had little time for sitting and the father a great deal.

Josiah's mother was a Bently. The Bentlys were good sound respectable people. Their talk was clean and they had no mortgage on their farms. The first

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Bently set foot on these shores in the year 1630, allegedly for reasons connected with religious freedom. Though such reasons were hardly borne out by the facts. The earlier colonial period was rife with laws passed by Bentlys and others against Baptists and Quakers and any sect not in exact conformity with their own views. They fought the Pequot Indians, nearly annihilating the entire tribe. They joined in the mild revolution which resulted in the imprisonment of the English governor. They survived all manner of hardship.

The history of the Maddens was somewhat less available. It was suspected that the American founder had formed part of that earlier Irish immigration which had given the more hidebound settlers some concern. At any rate the Irish blood had trickled growing thinner through the various matings which at last produced the generation of which Josiah was the most notable member.

All four of the Madden brood were worthy. It must have been the Bently strain that made them so—the Bently strain which of itself had grown a little brittle. There was Josiah and the two girls Lillian and Ruth, and Amos who was the youngest. Josiah never cared much for Amos, which made it all the more remarkable, his keeping him in school, sending him to the Normal School in Lexington and even finally aiding him in the attainment of an education higher than Lexington could provide. Amos never cared much for Josiah either, nor thanked him, though eventually he paid him back most of the money Josiah had put out in his behalf. It was a straight and narrow road Amos travelled—no ups

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and downs. And—to continue for a moment with the history of Amos—an accounting which has no particular place in any history of Josiah—he repaid his brother not only in money but in the advantage he took of the benefits received. He became a teacher of English in one of the better schools, his career remaining somewhat static between mediocrity and the lower levels of scholastic distinction. There were several initials after his name. He would retire on a pension.

As for the sisters, they needed less assistance, being fine handsome girls and finding themselves husbands rather earlier than most girls did in that part of the country. The whole family had looks—even the bookish Amos. Mrs. Madden herself was an impressive woman in every inch of her five feet-one. Looking at her you would never guess that for many years she had been burdened with a drunken husband and the soiled clothes of the privileged.

Josiah was still extraordinarily young when Mrs. Madden ceased to take in washing and they moved to a better house on a good residential street. The house was painted buff color and boasted three stories. This last was important because, had it boasted but two Josiah's father might not have been killed when he jumped from a window in a fit of D.T.'s. You couldn't deny that this regrettable accident was a welcome release for everyone. Josiah was able to save some money and his mother occupied her new-found leisure in crocheting a series of bedspreads for the benefit of the semi-annual fairs of the First Congregational Church. Mrs. Madden was always an ardent church goer. Her husband had rarely gone because Sunday morning fol-

lowed too closely on Saturday night. But she praised the Lord enough for two—enough for three you might say, because Josiah himself had never had much time for this, well baptized as he had been.

Though the purpose of Mrs. Madden's bedspreads was Christian, the design was heathen. They were wrought in squares containing a peculiar floral motive. It was not copied from any flower in her geometric garden patch, but from the pattern on a tea cup her father had once brought her. Her father had been at one time in the China Trade. It was an exact copy. Everything the woman did was exact. Josiah always remembered the picture she presented at her husband's grave. Her decent black dress hung about her ankles in straight stiff folds. Her black-gloved hands were tightly clasped. Her figure was unbowed. She appeared as unmoved and as immovable as the gravestones adjacent to the ceremony. And yet she might have been given credit for a sorrow too deep for tears.

Walking beside her eldest son on the way home, she made to him one sparse comment: "Well Josiah, you're the *one* of the family now. But as you've been that for a long time I don't presume the difference will be much noticed."

Josiah noticed it. That night at supper his place was set at the table-head—a place which had often been untenanted but always kept. His mother had paid him a compliment not as empty as most compliments. She had changed the quality of his responsibility. There was something feudal in it. She had conferred on him a title. Then the war came, and Josiah's going, and his

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return as a hero. It was then, as has been said, that he first considered politics as a career.

He didn't like machines. He never had. But the sort of machine he would encounter in politics was a very different article from the sort to be found in shoe factories. The cogs and levers in men were his natural ground for tinkering, and not the revolution press or the stamping machine or the rapidly revolving knives which trimmed shoe heels to the required shape. It was owing to a moment's carelessness while tending this last that the fourth finger of his left hand was missing. The proper manipulation of such things was an extension of instinctive co-ordination with which Josiah had no traffic. He was never their creature or their inventor. Management was his line—the management of people. It was through his talent for management that he had got along as well as he had.

As for the machine in politics, at first to Josiah it was little more than a phrase. But he found out what it meant—and not from one of Amos's dictionaries either. What was representative government? A great many people owned the votes and only a few the property. The political machine was necessary in order to give these last the power they would not otherwise possess and to which they certainly had earned the right. The whole thing was a compromise. Democracy—real democracy—was comparatively new in the world's history and slow in rising. Josiah had always admired democracy in terms of his own opportunity. But perhaps there was something else in it besides the chance it offered to the exceptional. There were well over a hundred million people in this country of his and they

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weren't all exceptional. But they had a voice almost like the whispering voice attributed to God. The action of the bullet was direct. The action of public opinion was more difficult to trace, but it existed. And it could be molded.

The governors of five states. . . . He never saw himself as one of these. Being himself a candidate for public office was a course he would adopt only for reasons of expedience. So many courses were. He was already keenly aware of the virtues of silence and of shadow. He had no wish for titles of distinction. That biblical king for whom he was named could keep his kingship. King Josiah's death, so the Bible said, had been lamented by all of Judah, and in life he had always done that which was right in the sight of the Lord and turned not aside. King Josiah's namesake made no claim to so holy a record, though the seed of the Puritan was still green in him.

He might have gone back to the factory for a while at least, as a temporary expedient while getting his bearings. He was a careful young man—never one to burn his bridges behind him—but the factory owner made him angry, pressing his hand and offering him work almost as if he were offering him charity.

"You'll find a job here, Joe. We can always make room for a hero."

He never liked being called "Joe." Later he got used to it but he never really liked it. And the factory owner had never called him "Joe" before. He knew suddenly that it wasn't his former job of which the owner spoke.

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"What will I find?" he asked. "A job sweeping out the office?"

"Oh not precisely. But there'll be something."

"I see," said Josiah.

"I was only trying to help you out—"

Josiah had a better opinion of his own abilities than this. He left the presence of his former employer as free a man as he had entered it, and with his self-confidence miraculously intact. It was this same self-confidence which carried him unscathed through the only period of his life when it might have been said of him that he made his living wholly outside the law. There were laws and laws. The Volstead Act was not one of these yet, but there was another one prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages to the public, a war measure which dovetailed with the better known amendment. Many people in Josiah's town resented having their personal habits so regulated. It was among free men a curtailment of freedom.

Supplying the liquor which could be purchased in the back room of the local drugstore was rather a strange occupation for a man who disliked drink as much as Josiah did. But it was profitable. Besides, very few people knew about it. The druggist—Perley by name—had started in a small way just as an accommodation to his customers and the trade had finally grown a bit out of hand. Josiah got it under control. Many people thought he had merely helped Perley out of certain financial difficulties and that it was natural under such circumstances that he should keep an eye on the business. He was never a man to lend money and then forget about it. His frequent consultations

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with Perley passed without comment. He doubted if even his mother knew what he was doing. She certainly never discussed it with him—not that this was proof, she having a silence which could match his own.

To become a successful bootlegger was never Josiah's notion. The vocation was too precarious and the cloak for it far too thin. It was like wearing a shoe with a light sole. At any moment the hole might come and your foot be on the ground. Politics were another matter. They'd been in the back of his mind for some time now and his irregular hours gave him a chance to look into things like that. He became more generally acquainted than he ever had before. After all, he was a hero and was asked to places to which in the past he had never gone. He got to know the right people, as well as the wrong ones his new business necessitated. He bought an automobile and found it useful on lawful as well as unlawful occasions.

Josiah learned a good deal that first summer after the war had come and gone and he had returned from it and become the purveyor of illicit merchandise for a back room. It was rather a rough school of learning, but the school from which he had just graduated with so much honor had been a rough school too. In this present one there was little rough upon the surface and Josiah had never had to learn discretion except at moments. If he'd had to, he would. He had a mind always gluttonous for information—not the sort for which his brother Amos yearned, to be found in books, but that stemming from human beings directly. Possession of facts which could be molded to his advantage was like money in the bank.

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There were the facts he observed and those he was told. Among these last he must winnow the false from the true. Some people never did this, or never knew the difference between a fact and a statement. But he had it all figured out. There were always the votes, wielded alike by the just and the unjust. Josiah found he had a talent for delivering votes, and this was what counted in the beginning. At first just one vote—his own—and then a few others and then a few more. If he kept it up, he would soon become recognized as a man with whom the powers that be would have to reckon. His adventure on the other side helped him a great deal. People were glad to know him and say they knew him and be seen talking to him. When he rang a doorbell he was let in.

He didn't have to say very much—just that John Jones was a fine fellow and deserved the support of every patriotic American. People couldn't argue patriotism with him, because he'd come across with the real article and they knew it! What was patriotism but an inner conviction that your own country was a success? Of course it was—which for Josiah was fortunate, as he was no champion of lost causes. As for this town of his—this town of some ten thousand inhabitants—he found it a whole government in miniature and learned from it more than it might seem there could be learned in such a place. With its factories, its foreign element, its tight little group of staid reactionaries, it was a perfect set-up for learning, a veritable primer, a first reader. And always the votes. . . .

Politics were always somewhat in a state of flux. You could drift in with them on a sort of tide, the way of

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the tide's rising often unseen. Just as in the shoe factory there had been other jobs than the actual tending of the machines, so were there other jobs in this more congenial arena than the actual running for public office. Other jobs. . . . There was a boss who created his own job and got to be a "key" man without anyone's ever knowing exactly how he had reached the eminence. There was money—some of it comparatively clean—legitimate you might say—and some of it, well, Josiah would know about that, being as he was in the business upon which he had temporarily embarked. Then instead of money—actual money—you could often call it assurances of a financial nature. Josiah had come home from the war and found certain changes to which he had adjusted himself as best he could. And the less said the better.

Meanwhile the drugstore flourished and sprouted a new front with a plate glass window. An electric sign replaced the old lettering—PERLEY'S DRUGSTORE. The wording was still the same, simple and old fashioned, but Mr. Perley, who was still the legal owner, had insisted upon that.

In a small community where everyone knew his neighbor's business, it was unbelievable how secret the real source of the sudden prosperity was kept. It was to an extent a conspiracy of secrecy. No one wanted to find out. There were exceptions, of course, such as the snooping and audacious acquaintance who broke through the general silence and asked Josiah point-

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blank if he knew that liquor could be obtained in the back room.

No flicker relieved the steadfastness of Josiah's eyes, "Do tell!"

"It's a fact."

"I'd be a mite careful naming it as such. As for me, not being a drinking man—"

"You mean to say you didn't know?"

The answer to that was no answer at all. "I don't reckon even Perley knows. He has a good tonic—sold six cases of it last month. And sometimes there's alcohol in those things—quite a high percentage."

"So they say."

There was a pause and silence, and from Josiah, the shadow of a shrug. Then, "people like to talk."

"Don't they?" This from the acquaintance, his audacity having served him but ill. He'd have one more try. "It would be too bad for Perley to get the sheriff after him."

"I don't think that'll likely happen."

"I hope not. Perley's well respected here."

The man must have heard something, but whatever it was it had certainly been no sound from the drug-store's back room—no loud carousing, no gun-fire, no stumbling steps. The men who frequented Perley's place took their pleasures cautiously, or were denied the privilege.

Josiah would see to that. Not himself—not in person—but he had ways of seeing to it, and passing the right word to the right offender and being sure that the amenities were preserved. He was working himself into a certain position of leadership, no one knew

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exactly how. This appeared to have come to him possibly because he was a hero, possibly because of some composite character he possessed which took in all the character of his environment. This early success of his was unimportant and therefore dangerous. A lesser man would have been satisfied with its scope and not gone on. A weaker man would have let it go to his head and therefore gone back. For the time being he let it ride, always thinking of the future. He had a lot of influence, particularly among the lowly. And their votes were as good as anyone's.

He was to them "Joe" Madden. He owned Perley's drugstore—or had at least put money in it. He'd made good in France too. Come back with a medal on his chest. Batted down a whole ant-hill of Heinies. Must have been quite a pig-sticking—and they surprised at what a genuine dyed-in-the-wool Yankee could do! If they'd had time to be surprised. Did they squeal, Joe, or just drop, or put up their hands and call "Kamerad"? That wouldn't get them much—not with Joe Madden. Joe could be tough when he had reason to be. Not in the way mostly called tough, though. He didn't drink. Didn't smoke. Didn't go round with women very much. And yet he got in too deep with Flo Gerrity—too deep to get out.

The town knew Flo pretty well—knew her before Joe had met up with her, he not being a man given to going around. Flo was pretty—you couldn't say she wasn't—plump as a partridge, with eyes big for her face and cute little feet. And she was quiet. It was just the way she looked that wasn't. The loafers around Tom's garage that used to be the livery stable always

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whistled when she went by tapping past them on her high heels with never a word nor a glance. You'd think she hadn't noticed.

For a while Flo had worked in the dining room of the Lindsay House where all the traveling men went. There were stories about the Lindsay House. Joe must have heard them, but he wasn't much on telling them—not even before he met Flo. Naturally he wouldn't tell them afterwards. Well, Joe did the right thing by her. He married her, all legal, and took her home to his mother. If anyone could have made an honest woman out of Flo, Joe Madden would have been the one.

If his first acquaintance with the girl had been in France, Josiah would never have married her. But if he had never gone to France he would never have married her either. He would not have become involved with her then, and so the question would never have arisen. He had known women in France—not so many, three or four in all—and they had done him no particular damage and caused him no particular regrets. He certainly hadn't married any of them. But he realized when he returned to his own sterner soil that he had somewhat discounted the force of a precedent, however lightly followed.

The widow who had run the wine shop in St. Mihiel was possibly the best of the lot. She was of a little different class from the others, and Josiah had been rather shocked at her being so free with herself. It didn't seem quite fitting. If he'd had the sense he'd been born with he would have married her and sent for her later, and

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she was the sort who could have held her head high in New England or anywhere else. There was that about her. And what people wouldn't know wouldn't hurt them. The language? She knew some English. She could have learned more. Yes, if Josiah had had sense—that kind of sense.

But he didn't, nor the gift of prophecy, so he returned with no commitments and Flo served him a forty-cent business man's lunch at the Lindsay House. He formed the habit of dropping in there for his noon meal. He was careful in his public approaches. It never occurred to him that people would know about him and Flo any more than they would know generally—or at least talk—about him and the liquor business. They didn't talk much to him. Uncharacteristically, it was his mother who talked, and all he had ever said to her even vaguely approaching the matter was that his hours had become too irregular to make it worth while for her to cook for him in the middle of the day.

His mother talked quite suddenly: "I hear you're going around with that Flo Gerrity at the Lindsay. Isn't that foolish?"

You could see if he'd been twenty years younger she'd have taken a hair brush to him or washed his mouth out with soap. That was her attitude, her pain, the way she drew down her mouth.

It was odd, Mrs. Madden wasn't someone Josiah could lie to. "Well—mebbe I am. But whoever told you was—"

"Don't fret about that! I shut 'em up proper. I just wanted to know if it was so."

And then before Josiah could answer, Mrs. Madden

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rose from her chair very rapidly and went out of the room and up the stairs to her own room on the floor above and into it, shutting her door sharply after her. Josiah hadn't been aware before that his mother even knew there was such a girl as Flo Gerrity. The world was a small place.

He made no attempt to follow Mrs. Madden or reason with her, if there could be found anything to reason about. In her precipitate exit she had displayed more emotion than she had ever permitted him to observe in her. She was wounded to the heart, and it was Josiah's first remarking of a heart, or a love, which had nothing in common with the love he bore to this girl or to anyone else. His mother disapproved of Flo so deeply that she must bare her soul in doing it, and then flee in vain effort to hold the shattered pieces of her self-possession. Flo in herself she could have ignored. It was Flo's contact with Josiah that was the match to light her flame of hate. He hadn't known before that she would mind so much anything he might ever do. But before, he had never seen her heart, or if it had ever been on view for him he had not noticed. The sight, and the entire incident, gave him a good deal of pause.

He must do something to retrieve himself. His mother's loving anger brought marrying Flo into the field of his open thought. Flo wasn't a bad sort, not really. She had a certain small efficiency. She was neat about her person. She was amiable. Though Josiah always had the uneasy suspicion that it was the neatness, the amiability, even the efficiency, of the woman whose very existence depended wholly on the pleasing of the male. His mother was neat and efficient too, though

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giving no effect of amiability. But it was for the elder woman's good opinion of herself that she was as she was, not for blandishments to any.

Josiah had never intended to marry Flo any more than a man who takes a small boat across a dangerous stretch of water intends to drown. He had not calculated the risk, because to his land-lubbing eyes there had not seemed to be one. The girl had had other lovers and they had not married her. But they had nothing to lose, and no welter of fears and motives, no curious loneliness which her presence sometimes assuaged. To the traveling men who came to the Lindsay House, the Lindsay House was France. It was a foreign port on a foreign shore from which they would sooner or later return to their own. Besides, Josiah made few major errors and thus kept his credit clear for an occasional mighty purchase in such coin.

He never forgave himself—not even at the beginning—nor was ever unaware of the situation he had created. And yet at the beginning and for some time after, his feeling for Flo was very intense, and not hatred either. Most people would have called it love. It could have been called so, using the word in the most commonplace of its meanings. He fell for her. He desired her. He got her. And then he couldn't shake her off. It wasn't that she clung to him with any unusual tenacity. The tenacity was his. That facet in Josiah's nature which made him educate his brother Amos for whom he never cared was joined with a sort of attachment like the feeling some people possess for pet animals.

In regard to marrying Flo there was a combination

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of motive and of circumstance. Josiah's intention, at first buried too deep to show, came more and more into the open. He had become involved with her. This was a mistake which lowered him in the world's estimate. By marrying her he could retrieve his mistake as well as himself. He was afraid of what people might say, and they might not have said anything from which he could not have recovered. He realized this last possibility when it did him no good to realize it. As for himself, he realized enough, even at the beginning, to mar any happiness he might have gained. There was a thread of scorn always, which made a sorry binding for his relationship, and the scorn was not for Flo. He would wake up in the night and know that she was lying by his side, and even as he stretched out his arms to enfold her he would know too that he would have been much better off were he still in his own narrow bed.

He retrieved himself first in another matter. He sold out his interest in Perley's back room—his good will and his connections, assets tangible and intangible, the extraordinary orderly integration of that bootlegging which finally trickled as strong drink into the glasses of Perley's customers.

Josiah had proved himself a good business man. But he didn't like business. He wouldn't have liked it even if it had dealt inside the law. Why be precariously placed for something you didn't like? The money wasn't enough. Some men had a theory that money possessed a solid value, that it was gold made by God Inscrutable for men to fight over. It wasn't what they could buy either directly or indirectly, but the money itself which such men cared about. It was the cold

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sheets of figures, the term *riches* in its most literal sense. Of course there were men who dealt in money and in nothing else and became powerful because of it. But there were various mediums of power. What was called money was only one of them.

The sum Josiah received for his business was a nest egg he could use in pursuit of his chosen calling. Being free and clear of illicit traffic, he was now wholly available for this. The political influence Josiah had finally attained could be quite an important asset if you made it so—particularly like this, at the beginning. The town had grown too topheavy to be governed as a town, so a charter had been procured, and a municipal incorporation and a mayor and a city council and all the trimmings.

Up to this time Josiah's political position had been nebulous—existent but difficult to place. He controlled votes. He exerted influence. He knew the right people. A nod from him meant something. A shake of the head meant more. He got results which sometimes were of value. The local political boss was a certain Judge Anders, and Judge Anders liked him. And he had connections with an element less desirable than the judge. Perhaps if his connections had not been so wide Judge Anders would not have seen to it that Josiah was elected a member of the City Council. It was all to the credit of Josiah that no one was surprised at this honor—not even Josiah himself. The town had risen—had become a city—and naturally Josiah had risen with it. Now who could tell what might be in store for him? He was

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wholly available for anything which his rising fortunes might bring. Had it excluded Josiah, the Council would have been less representative than it was. And Josiah was in a position to give his time and thought to his duties there. He became also the local representative of a fire insurance company.

As for the sum Josiah received for his interest in Perley's back room, it was a nest egg, as has been said. Few people knew of it, the transaction having been secret and in cash. Fewer people knew the amount.

His bank took it in the stride of banks when he deposited the money. It was in cash that most of Josiah's deposits were made, and it was not for a bank to reason why the coffers bulged. There were no documents, detailed and tell-tale—just the sum written in the bank book, and the deposit slip. Possibly the fire insurance business had yielded an unexpected profit.

It was of course to the interest of both buyer and seller in this very private deal that there should be no written evidence. Their word was good. It had to be. The thing had been managed without witnesses, the time and place self-picked for such a bargain.

"Now everything's settled?" Josiah's customer had verified.

"That's right, Genarro—" The man's name was Tony Genarro.

The two shook hands on it, Josiah having counted the money and placed it in an inner pocket. As he turned to get into his car, which was not as good a car as the other man's, he had the fleeting expectation that there might be a shot aimed between his shoulders. But no shot was forthcoming. He had taken chances be-

fore and still survived. He drove off slowly. Once over the brow of the hill ahead, he cut off down a side road and breathed easier.

The air was certainly pure enough to breathe, with the chill of fall in it and the sharp tang of pine trees. There was a grove of these through which the road passed, cutting its way among a carpet of pine needles before it swung south and back towards the civilization which had recently attained the dignity of a city. A small animal scampered away, momentarily discovered by the headlights. In summer the grove was sometimes used for picnics. Now it seemed eerier than such a use would warrant. It was a lonesome place enough, and Josiah was glad when he left it behind him.

The druggist, Perley, hadn't liked it very much, Josiah's turning the illicit part of the business over to this professional bootlegger, this Tony Genarro who was nothing more, so Perley had said, than a crook and a gangster and a foreigner. There wasn't anything that Perley could do about it. Compared to Josiah, he was rather a helpless little man despite his good schooling and his pharmacist's degree. But it would have been impossible, Josiah's going on with it—quite impossible! He had so many things to think about, so many irons in the fire. Why, the business of the whole community was practically in his hands, he being by no means least of the chosen agents called Council Members. The technique of government absorbed him.

It was sometimes thought that the town's city pretensions might have been a trifle premature. Compared to the big industrial centers, even its factories were small. But that didn't worry Josiah unduly. In a way

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it worked to his advantage. Be a big frog in a small pond—at least for the time being. And his position as councilman gave him a leverage, even though the whole set-up was incidental to his less official activities. Driving back with his ill-gotten gains so safe in his inner pocket, he turned these matters over in his mind. He came close to forgetting that he had promised Perley to stop by. But he must do that and assure him that everything was settled. He was greatly relieved that it was. After all, people, not merchandise either liquid or leather, held his interest.

The store was quiet. Faint sounds came from the room at the back. But in the area where the counter was there was no one visible. Perley was busy in the small closet which had a sink and a sort of laboratory table. He made up his prescriptions there, and when Josiah entered it was from this haven and this occupation that he looked up. The front door had a bell which rang when the door was opened.

"Oh—it's you—"

"Yes," said Josiah, "it's me."

"You'll have to wait a minute."

"I'll wait." Josiah stepped around the counter and stood in the archway between the closet and the store, watching his former partner who was weighing some white powder on a tiny scales. "Well, Doc, it's all over," he told him presently.

"Meaning?" Perley asked, not turning.

"Meaning I'm just a stranger here now."

Perley measured the powder into several squares of

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white paper he had laid ready on the table. "I see. I hope it'll be all right."

"It will. This Genarro man will pay you your rent. He has to have you here. He couldn't do business if he didn't."

"I'm sorry I ever started the thing. But I was hard up and I thought it would help."

"Didn't it?"

"I guess so. You and I have got along without any trouble."

"Indeed we have!" Josiah put a certain heartiness into his manner—a heartiness the druggist seemed to ignore completely. He was intent on wrapping the separate packages of powder together in a single larger package which he labelled.

"But I wasn't counting on anything like this," he said.

"No, I guess you weren't. I wasn't either—not at first. Conditions change. Besides, a member of the Council has to watch himself, and this business—" Josiah finished his sentence with a nod in the direction of the back room.

"That's your side of it."

"Maybe."

"You're doing a sight of spreading out. Next thing, you'll be running for mayor. The fact is, I heard tell you were figuring to next election."

"You heard tell wrong. I might pick a mayor but I wouldn't be one."

"You might never get to be one."

"Why not, if I wanted to?"

The store was still empty and during all this talk

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first one and then the other of the two men had glanced out to make sure that it remained so. Sometimes the bell device on the door didn't work and sometimes someone came through from the rear. Now they both looked out in wordless but mutual agreement as to the necessity for absolute privacy.

"Why not?" Josiah repeated his question.

Perley's answer was the merest whisper. "Flo Gerity. Folks here don't like Flo very much."

There was hardly any pause because Josiah was doing his thinking very fast. "That wouldn't bother me any. Flo's going to move pretty soon."

"Where to? Are you planning to send her away?"

"No," said Josiah, making in his own mind a clean and sudden sweep of his entire past. "I'm planning to marry her."

Perley picked up the package of powders and carried it into the main store, laying it on the counter gently. "Well, I'll be damned!"

"No need to be. I've been planning to for quite a spell."

Josiah had intended stepping through to the back room to see for the last time how things were there. Instead he found himself walking out into the street. The bell on the door jangled loudly. It wasn't New Year's, but it might as well have been for him.

2.

THEY were a handsome couple, no one could deny that—such a contrast—the tall raw-boned man and the plump little woman who didn't seem to have any bones at all, but instead just a nicely molded figure full of curving flesh. They were certainly a pair—Flo and Joe. And Flo and Joe's mother were a pair too, though neither of the women could have been exactly happy, in the connection they had become. Flo was smart enough in little ways—neat-handed. She could have learned to run one of the simpler machines in the shoe factory. The elder Mrs. Madden could have learned this too. But in her case the lesson, once learned, would have been over. Finally she would have fought the machine, trying to wrest from its inanimate core something she had willed that it should do.

Bringing Flo to his mother's house was, on Josiah's part, only a temporary expedient. He knew it wouldn't work. But for the moment he had no other place to bring her. There was no hotel in town save the Lindsay House, and he certainly wasn't going to move in there! After all it was Flo who was doing the moving, not himself. There wasn't to be any Flo Gerrity but in her stead Mrs. Josiah Madden. As soon as he could, he would find a suitable house and leave his mother in the peace she so well deserved. Flo and she would get

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along all right so long as they didn't see each other too often.

The man who ran the local paper knew Josiah well and gave the wedding quite a write-up. You wouldn't have thought from reading it that no one was present except the couple most concerned, the minister and the necessary witnesses, of whom Josiah's mother was one. It was true that the paper recorded the occasion as a quiet and family affair, no comment being made naturally on the fact that the bride appeared to possess no family. As for Josiah's, his brother Amos wasn't present nor his sisters Lilian and Ruth. Mrs. Madden might have made her daughters come, but evidently her sense of duty didn't extend so far. After the ceremony the wedding party repaired to her home where refreshments were served. She had baked them a wedding cake, laid out the table with her best china, and there were pickles and sliced ham. Greater love hath no man than this.

But she had followed the letter of the law rather than the spirit, for she did not remain downstairs to preside at the feasting. In fact she rather markedly left the happy couple and the minister and the second witness to their fate. This second witness was a young henchman of Josiah's, Max Keg by name, who had formed for him a sort of hero worship which Josiah was not above finding useful. The bootlegger, Tony Genarro, had got wind of the thing and had sent around a magnum of champagne. Someone—possibly Josiah himself—had rescued it from the kitchen, but not in time. It was insufficiently iced. Nevertheless it added a note of gayety to an occasion otherwise somewhat lacking

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in gayety. The minister, veteran of many weddings though he was, had never tasted champagne. He seemed to think it a peculiar variety of soda pop. He waxed quite sentimental and shocked the small company considerably by quoting passages from Solomon's Song of Songs. They hadn't known before that anything like that was in the Bible.

Josiah took his bride on a brief honeymoon to Boston. He had business in Boston anyway. There was a man there he wanted to see. Time enough when he got back to look around for a house of his own, and furnish it and leave his mother in the house which should become hers exclusively. In a legal sense it was hers already. Josiah had turned it over to her some time before. That was before he had gone against his mother—flagrantly against her—and married this woman who was in her eyes outside the pale, and brought her to her sacred doorstep and over it. There was a curious and wordless agreement between mother and son as to the heinousness of the crime. He who had committed it and she who suffered from it were in their separate ways united against Flo Gerrity, now Mrs. Josiah Madden. Flo wasn't this and she wasn't that, she wasn't the wife that Josiah should or might have had. But she was human. She possessed basically all the human attributes. In about six months' time she was even going to reproduce herself and reproduce Josiah.

But no one knew that yet except herself and except Josiah. The brief secret had been well kept. The last thing Josiah could have stomached was the speculation which would be sure to arise as to whether the baby would have any real right to the name of Madden—

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any right other than a legal one. Josiah himself must have been pretty sure. He wouldn't be above a little cheating in the more circumspect forms, but being cheated himself he wouldn't care about. Flo would hardly have had the nerve to lie to him—not about a thing like that. And so far, no one knew. Mrs. Madden the elder would know soon enough. But she would never say what she thought, whatever it might be.

This man in Boston whom Josiah wanted to see had been his company captain on the other side. His name was Sam Eldridge—Samuel Hopkinson Eldridge—and he was now a member of the state assembly. The assembly wasn't in session at this particular time but Eldridge lived in Boston and had more than once suggested that whenever Josiah came there he must look him up. Since the war some correspondence had passed between the two and Eldridge had already been of considerable assistance to the budding politician. In a way it hardly seemed the moment, with Flo along, to renew in person this important contact. But it wouldn't have to be a social call and Flo's presence in Boston wouldn't have to be mentioned. In fact Josiah never knew exactly how the matter did rise to the surface through the many other matters there were to talk about.

Eldridge asked him if he were married and Josiah of course said he was. His disposition was to let it go at that but Eldridge was the sort who could ask questions without seeming to pry. One thing had led to another. It seemed that the former captain had recently been married too. Why wouldn't it be pleasant for Mr. and Mrs. Madden to join Mr. and Mrs. Eldridge at dinner?

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That put Josiah in a spot, and he knew it. The differences between himself and Eldridge could be ignored. The differences between the two women would, Josiah knew, be insurmountable. He made an excuse that seemed a bit lame. Eldridge refused to accept it. Josiah had long ago learned the value of seeming and sudden frankness:

"My wife is a country girl. I'm afraid having dinner with you and Mrs. Eldridge would embarrass her. She would hardly know what to do."

"You're not apologizing for her?" Eldridge asked. Evidently one did not apologize for one's wife, no matter how needful the act might be.

"No—just explaining—"

"With a husband in politics," Eldridge cut him off, "the sooner she learns what to do, the better!"

"I'm afraid she's not quite ready for learning."

"As you please," said Eldridge, and changed the subject.

Josiah knew then that his marriage was not the way out of trouble he had thought it would be. Flo would never be ready for learning. And this inability, being so different from any he himself possessed, was what he scorned in her most. But anyway Eldridge thought he was worth spending time with, and Eldridge was an important man. What he thought now other people would come to think. He was important not only in Boston but in the whole state of Massachusetts. He was a graduate of Harvard College. His father was a senator in Washington. His grandfather had been governor of Connecticut. The history of the entire country was

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dotted with the names of his ancestors. He now headed a committee in the assembly on interurban transit.

He asked Josiah certain questions about the granting of franchises locally. There was one in particular that there had been a little trouble concerning—and markedly so in Josiah's neck of the woods. When the House sat again this matter was slated to come up.

"I'll look into it," Josiah said.

"I wish you would. You have ways of looking into things—ways that are dark, and tricks that are vain—" Eldridge smiled, though the comment didn't strike Josiah as humorous. But he could stand a disagreement as to humor because Eldridge went on to suggest that it might be a good idea if he were to become a member of the state assembly himself. He could undoubtedly manage to be elected from his newly acquired city and it would help.

Josiah was flattered, and could see how it would help. But why shouldn't he use his abilities in controlling votes in getting someone else elected? He didn't say this to Eldridge—not in so many words. "It's something to consider," he answered instead.

He had come to Boston a power in his little city. He returned from it a power—at least potentially—in the whole state. All this in spite of Flo, who wasn't really a country girl at all in the sense in which her husband had intended to communicate her status. It did in a manner satisfy his ego to know that there wasn't any woman furthering his interests by her feminine machinations. The dark ways were all his own and he wasn't tied to any woman's apron strings, except perhaps his mother's, and these were long and the knots loose.

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Josiah had a little office on the top floor at the corner of Vine and Centre Streets. One of the smaller banks occupied the lower part of the building, and between this level and Josiah a dentist named Cohen plied his trade. Josiah's place was reached by wooden stairs which were rather old and quite dirty. On the ground glass half of the door J. MADDEN was painted in small letters, and above it in letters but slightly larger the name of the Fire Insurance Company of which in his less occupied moments Josiah had become the local representative. There was a safe in one corner, an oak roll-top desk, a swivel chair, two or three straight backed chairs, several spittoons and a screen with a built-in wash basin behind it. That was all, save for the flamboyant art calendar provided by the insurance company. The flesh of the girl the calendar portrayed was very pink and the wall back of it was very shabby. There was a harsh, uncompromising quality about the whole room which seemed part of the air its occupants must always breathe. But Josiah was too busy to be bothered by things like that. What with taking advantage of his political opportunities and getting a house ready for himself and his wife, he had a great deal to attend to. It wasn't like the old ten-hour work shift at the factory. When you were through with that you were through and your time was your own. He was never through. He had few real friends and fewer relaxations. The dentist, Cohen, functioned under both these meager heads.

Cohen was one of the few Jews in town, and well liked. He could put in a set of false teeth that looked almost natural—not that he had to do this for Josiah

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who had thirty-two perfect teeth of his own. In fact, it was Cohen's standing joke that he was going to knock out a few of these just to keep the record straight. Pint-size that he was, he had about as much chance of knocking out Josiah's teeth as he had of swimming the Atlantic Ocean. Besides, he wouldn't have done it anyhow. He admired Josiah. The little office overhead aroused his curiosity. So much seemed to go on there, and yet so little. Cohen had started out as a chemist and taken to dentistry only as an after-thought. He possessed the exactitude of the scientist; and here was something which seemed to thrive and yet had nothing exact about it!

When his work was done for the evening he would clean up his place and his instruments and scrub his hands and come up that final flight. Sometimes the office would be locked and deserted. Sometimes it would be open and as crowded as a trolley-car. There was no nourishment, of course, in a place that was closed, and when it was crowded Cohen felt his presence an intrusion. But sometimes there would just be Josiah leaning back in his swivel chair with his long feet on the desk. These were the times. And as for Josiah's own feeling in the matter, it was all right to know a dentist if you didn't have to go to him professionally.

He found he could talk quite freely to Cohen, thus clarifying certain reaches of his own thought. He rarely talked freely to anyone. He was generally apt to be too silent, or else say things only with a motive behind the saying. There were questions the little man would ask and he would find himself answering—questions he had never considered before they were put to him by this

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companion who made his living from the sickness in people's mouths.

Who was there else to whom Josiah could divulge his mind? Not Sam Eldridge certainly, in Boston—he had to be careful what he told Eldridge—and not Flo and not his mother, nor the bootlegger Tony Genarro, nor his fellow members of the Council, nor the men who did his bidding for favors received, nor those few by acceptance of whose bidding he, himself had risen! Not even to Perley, his one time partner. There was a rift between himself and Perley since the deal with Genarro, a rift unstated but nevertheless felt. Josiah knew that Perley considered he hadn't been sufficiently consulted about the changed set-up, and also thought he rated a share of the money Genarro had paid. Well, let Perley nurse his grudge. You couldn't get on in the world without making a few enemies!

Considering his interest in people and the content of his chosen calling, Josiah was rather a lonely young man. It was in part this loneliness which had exposed him to Flo. Dr. Cohen was another and quite different aid, not a conscience or a confessor, but a sort of second self perched on his shoulder, a creature within sound of his voice which would otherwise have fallen upon the desert air. Flo was curiously jealous of Cohen—called him that dirty little kike—and as he presented no benefit which she could understand, didn't see why Josiah should bother with him. She liked tall handsome men who wore the latest thing in haberdashery. Josiah was inclined to carelessness in regard to this last item but he fulfilled her other specifications,

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and he was what was known as a comer—he was going places.

Exactly what were these places? That was what Dr. Cohen was interested in knowing. "Your ultimate goal?" he put the question to Josiah during one of these rare communions from which both men seemed to derive such value. "To me that isn't clear—"

"Why just to go on running things more and more—or, rather, I want to say who's running them, and how, and without what the lawyers call 'let or hindrance'. I want to have the final say, the last word. I haven't got it now—I don't kid myself. But some day I will. Someday I'll be a real success."

"I would say you were already on the way to it—"

"Am I? I've made some bad mistakes."

"You're young yet."

"I don't feel very young. But then I've been working since I was twelve."

"You're young and you're strong," Cohen insisted.

"Oh, I guess I'm strong enough! Nothing seems to faze me very much. I'm always surprised at how much attention most people pay to things that are in their way."

The two sat silent for a while. There was a bright unshaded light over the desk. It brought into sharp relief certain objects and cast deep shadows over the rest. It was always a puzzle to Cohen that Josiah himself seemed deliberately to have chosen the shadows instead of the light. He had such an obvious distaste for coming into the open as a candidate for political office. He could so easily have had himself elected to the state assembly, and now there was talk, Cohen knew, of his

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being considered for mayor. But he didn't want either post. Why? If you gave your life to the public service you accepted such responsibilities. And Josiah didn't. Was it some inner dread of his, some complex of inferiority? To hear the man talk you would think being a candidate was like having a bad tooth in your head which couldn't be extracted, or being possessed of an incurable and chronic disease! Even in office, Josiah had told him, you would be trapped and uneasy, thinking of the next election. The side-lines were better—handle the reins and let the other fellow do the hauling. Perhaps it was true there was more power that way—more real power—and less obligation.

Of course Josiah was a member of the city council. But if he'd refused that there might be thought there was something wrong with him which he was afraid people would discover. As things were, going his own gait, he'd come quite a distance, and the proof of the pudding was in the eating. Quite a distance. . . . Though not as far as Cohen himself had come, across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Josiah was always resenting the fact that he had had no proper childhood, having worked since he was twelve. Cohen had worked since he was eight. Josiah, in this remarkable country, had always eaten and had a bed to sleep in. Not in France, perhaps, not a bed—but that was war. The war in this country hadn't lasted long enough to pick up Cohen with his thick-lensed glasses.

The hour was getting on. Cohen rose.

"Are you going home?" Josiah asked.

"I thought I would." The dentist lived in a furnished

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room on the other side of town. At one time he had been married, but his wife had left him for another man. He hadn't been too upset about it, never having been particularly suited to domesticity.

"I'd walk across with you," Josiah told him, "but there are a few things I've got to attend to." He looked down at some papers on his desk, as if they were the things.

"I didn't mean to keep you from your work."

"It was nothing that couldn't wait."

Cohen paused in the doorway. "You spoke just now of being strong. Some men reach very high places because they are strong—I mean just because of that. And there's no flaw. Good night."

"Good night. I guess I've got plenty of flaws!" Josiah added, thinking suddenly of his wife.

Cohen turned and went out and down the stairs. Josiah listened to the light step fading out. And then the door which was the entrance to the offices at one side of the entrance to the bank, opened and shut. Josiah was relieved that his visitor had left when he did. As a matter of fact Judge Anders was coming to see him, and it wouldn't have done for the judge to be caught coming here, even by Cohen, to whom Josiah could spill out his soul and his history, but not his business.

Judge Anders was the real boss of the whole works in this part of the world and by far the biggest man in town. He was one of the few—the very few—from whom Josiah took his orders. He had connections in a much larger city than this one, but had retired from the

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Bench there some time past and had now taken up politics more or less as a hobby. But he worked at it. You had to work at it or leave it alone. Most rich men didn't realize this. In his earlier days he had been a Democrat. In New England he had been forced to switch parties but he still had the connections. He had connections here too. He had been born and brought up in the big brick house on the hill. There was a trimmed balsam hedge bordering the grounds and an iron stag on the front lawn which was so real it frightened people coming up the driveway at night. As a young man on his native heath—to which he had now returned—he had known Josiah's mother, who was a Bently, and admired her.

Wouldn't that have been something, to have had Judge Anders for a father? School—college—law—everything right in the hand! But maybe it was better so, Josiah thought. People trusted him largely because he was one of themselves. Any politician born with a silver spoon in his mouth must contend against certain obstacles. Coming up from the bottom helped more than it hindered in getting along with the great mass of people. You knew their problems and their prejudices at first hand and could deal with both. Sometimes just talk wasn't enough. If a man were out of a job you could get him one, or a family thrown out because they couldn't pay the rent you could fix it with the landlord.

Anders coming here to see him meant a great deal to Josiah. It would have meant a great deal to a number of people had they known about it, which they wouldn't—certainly not from Josiah and even more certainly not from the Judge. The two had usually conducted their

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negotiations on more neutral territory. This present mission was evidently as important as it was private. And the man appeared so casual, just as though he were out for an evening's walk and had stopped by. It was lucky Cohen had left when he had, because the more distinguished visitor arrived a little early. Judge Anders was a fat man with a genial manner, though not so fat as he once had been, and with the flesh hanging a little loose on him. His clothes hung loose too. They had been made to order by an expensive Fifth Avenue tailor in the days of his judgeship, and he had never bothered to get new ones or to have them altered.

His entrance took Josiah by surprise, while he was still thinking of this and that.

"What's on your mind?" Anders asked, looking at him sharply.

"Nothing much. I was on the edge of finding out something—that was all."

"Sounds interesting—"

"Not particularly so—no one else would think it mattered."

"Secrets from me, Madden?"

Josiah was quick in his denial. He was always anxious with the Judge to put his best foot forward. "God, no! I was just thinking about myself."

Judge Anders laughed his peculiar whinnying laugh. "You wouldn't be a Yankee if you didn't think about yourself! And what were you on the edge of finding out?"

"I don't know. I told you I was only on the edge. My life, I suppose, and how things have been, and how

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they'd have been if my life had been different—the kind of man I seem to be—”

“Do you feel in yourself the possibility of ever being a great one?”

“I’ve seen no evidence of it as yet,” said Josiah dryly. His caller had taken the heaviest of the straight-backed chairs, and he had reseated himself at his own desk. Some men came to the point of a visit at once but a man like Judge Anders took his own time. You couldn’t hurry him but must play the game as he wished to play it. “I have faith in myself,” Josiah added. “If I hadn’t I’d have quit long ago.”

“You mean you wouldn’t have wanted to go on with this precious life of yours?”

“No, I don’t mean that exactly—”

“And I suppose you have faith in your country?”

“Yes.”

“It’s a damn funny country, Madden. And who runs it? Men like us—sitting in a little place like this—” The Judge paused and looked about at the walls from which in spots the plaster had fallen. He looked at the scarred desk and then down at a spittoon—not too clean—convenient to his chair, and then looked up again. “It would be a pity if you quit. There aren’t so many men who can juggle people round and make them do things—even make them perform the very simple act of voting the right way.”

It must be important, Josiah thought, what the Judge wanted of him—important and difficult. He was certainly laying a heavy foundation of flattery, and he wasn’t finished yet.

“You’ve done all right for yourself,” he went on

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placidly, "better than a good many men who've been at it longer. Here—have a cigar." Josiah shook his head. "Oh, I always forget you don't smoke. Odd thing for a man not to do. Most men learn the habit back of the barn in their earliest youth."

"I never had much time for that kind of thing in my youth—"

"I know. You're filled with the beautiful snobbery of poverty."

"Besides, I guess my mother wouldn't have taken very kindly to it."

The Judge smiled. "I guess she wouldn't—not if she'd found it out! By the way, how is your mother? I hear she's going to be left alone soon in that little house you bought her. You've been a good son. I'm alone too, since my wife passed on. And not having any children. . . . Too bad—"

What was too bad? Were their domestic arrangements the thing Anders had come to talk about? Josiah doubted it. It was a little late to change them now. The beautiful snobbery of poverty. . . . Josiah thought he could have managed well enough without it if a change had come some thirty years ago—if he'd had Judge Anders for a father.

"I remember the first time I ever saw your mother. It was at a church social. She wore a white muslin dress with pink ribbons. She was so cute I tried to kiss her and she slapped my face."

Josiah couldn't quite fancy his mother in a white muslin dress with pink ribbons slapping the Judge's face. A lot of water had gone under the bridge since then. A lot of water seemed to be going under it now.

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It was a favorite phrase of his—water under the bridge. . . .

The Judge shifted his position. "Foreigners don't understand us, Madden—not even since the war they don't—Wilson tracking over to Europe thinking he'd fix things. No wonder he's a sick man now."

"Wilson's a Democrat."

"I know—filled with noble sentiments. You and I are practical men. We set ourselves a task and the process of it holds us fast."

"I'm afraid I don't know what you mean—not exactly—"

"I mean we attend to our knitting and don't get tangled up too much in the ultimate vision of our accomplishment."

It was coming now. This was the preamble. Thus warned, Josiah gathered together his attention which had wandered a little while his superior had talked of so many things which didn't have anything to do with anything. At last it came:

"At the meeting the other evening, you brought up the matter of that franchise."

"Yes, I believe I did," Josiah agreed, not committing himself very much.

"I gathered, from what little you said, that you favored it."

"I think it might be a good thing. Though some folks say we don't need a second trolley system here."

"They're right." Anders puffed at his cigar. Not being sure yet what he had in view, Josiah waited. At last his wait was rewarded. "The one we have would need to go out of business."

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Josiah tried to see the Judge's face, to see what was in his mind, but the older man had turned away and was looking out of the window. Any politician no matter how diverse in outer seeming from any other, has in common with his colleagues certain qualities and talents, of which the ability to look away at the right time was one. The franchise under discussion was the same which had been mentioned by Sam Eldridge in Boston, the one Eldridge said was slated to come up when the Assembly met again. But Josiah saw no point in bringing Eldridge's name into it at the moment.

"I hadn't thought of that," he said at last.

"Thought of what?"

"The possibility of our present system going out of business. But I can see the logic in it."

"I fancy it could be arranged," Anders murmured.

"I fancy so."

"It's a trifle difficult for me myself to make a move—under the circumstances."

Josiah leaned back until the ceiling and not the wall came within his vision. "Any move must be considered in the light of them," he said.

The Judge bore down on the abstraction. "How true that is! And it's something most people don't appreciate."

"Why should they?"

"Why indeed?" Judge Anders moved closer. His chair scraped heavily on the bare floor. "You see, this new company is exceptionally sound and I happen to own a little stock in it."

It also happened that Josiah, in fulfilling his promise to Eldridge to look into matters, had found this out. At the time he hadn't attached to it the significance that

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should have been clear. And of course it depended on what you chose to call a little. There was a split second when all the pieces of the puzzle fell into place. "Oh do you?" he asked innocently. And then—"I'm afraid I'm not so fortunate."

"I didn't think you were. What I really had in view for you is that you should obtain for yourself the shares in the old company—I mean the one at present in operation here—all of them, that is to say, which you would find available. I fancy you could get them at a very attractive price—after a while. Then—later—a suitable exchange might be arranged. Quite a profitable exchange perhaps. But first things first, of course. I want to assure you of my assistance." Anders paused. "In every way," he added.

"I don't have to assure you of mine," said Josiah.

"Good! I'm in a position to give you some pretty sound advice."

"I'm afraid," said Josiah, "in a thing like this I wouldn't get very far without it. It's a line a little new to me."

"You don't mind new lines, do you?"

"Not at all." If he'd minded new lines he would hardly have landed where he was now, he thought to himself.

He didn't say this. In fact very little more was said either by himself or by the Judge, who left shortly afterwards. Considering its importance, the whole interview—including preliminaries—had been brief. The brevity was obvious, the importance something which had to be understood from within. Even Josiah wasn't entirely sure that he grasped the situation in all its implications. If he succeeded in this mission with which Anders had

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burdened him, he wondered if he would become to him a little too indispensable ever to be released for wider fields. Had he been told a year ago that his own value to the Judge might grow too great, he would have regarded such a prospect as the sheerest nonsense. But now he took it into account. It would certainly have to be taken into account if he succeeded. If he failed—well, if he failed he would disappoint a number of men who evidently had faith in him. He didn't even know who all these men were but they knew who he was. That was plain enough. And taken all in all, he was laying himself wide open for triumph. The highly negotiable securities which would eventually fall into his lap were the least of the items to be considered. He was familiar with bribery in its crasser forms, though he'd never taken a bribe himself—not of money.

The system with which Josiah was really involved was a good deal more fool-proof than that. You reaped a reward for what you did, but it was a reward the outsider would be at some trouble to do anything about. If you gained control of a big enough block of votes, you yourself had to be reckoned with and the more you were reckoned with, the more votes you were able to control. There would come a time, in your own particular bailiwick at least, when it would be hard to elect a man—much less nominate him—unless you yourself had some good reason for wanting him. And the men at the head, if they wanted him enough themselves, would see that you had such reason. No one was in this closely integrated circle of power for their health exactly. The circle widened. This was the reward and the reason. And you couldn't bargain too much. Anyone who tried

to bargain with Judge Anders, for instance, would get no place fast. The whole matter would take thought.

And meanwhile there was Flo. In her delicate condition Flo had lost some of her amiability. She was inclined to be irritable if left alone too long. Down the street a florist was just closing his store. Josiah stopped in and bought some flowers.

3.

JOSIAH acted quite pleased about the baby. Well, he should. It was a nice boy—well formed and healthy—just as good a baby as anyone could have. It was lucky he had married Flo, because the baby would have come anyway, and if he hadn't married her it wouldn't have been so good. As things were, Mr. and Mrs. Josiah were getting up in the world. The furniture he'd bought for the house was all new and shiny. They had a hired girl and a man who came in to keep the walk clear and tend the furnace. It was too bad Josiah refused to have himself elected mayor. Flo would have liked being the mayor's wife. All these women who snubbed her wouldn't have dared to snub her then. Maybe they didn't wish such an obstacle to their natural pleasure. Women were voting now. Why, even Flo must vote. It wouldn't have done for her not to, being who she had become! And Josiah was kind. He went to Boston and bought Flo a genuine sealskin coat. It wasn't every woman in town who possessed one—not by any means. Old lady Madden didn't, but she didn't need to—she had her pride to keep her warm.

It was this pride, Flo supposed, that had made her turn down Judge Anders' offer to come and keep house for him. The more fool she! It seemed to Flo a very

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one of those things, and Flo didn't pay much attention, until one noon when Mrs. Madden came in to see her grandchild, bringing a sweater she'd finished for him, and Josiah happened to be home for lunch. He asked her to have a bite with them, and of course Flo seconded the invitation, and so she did. During the course of the meal she happened to mention having been somewhere.

"How did you get there?" Josiah asked. "Walk?"

"No, the trolley runs right by the door."

"I don't want you to use the trolley," Josiah said. "I've told you that before!" He spoke quite sharply.

"What do *you* know of it?" his mother said, looking at him in such a funny way.

Josiah got unexpectedly angry at that, and the two had quite an argument right in Flo's presence. For once, Flo was on Mrs. Madden's side. The woman hadn't said anything for Josiah to have taken so amiss.

"You'll have to take my word," Josiah said at last, calming down a little. "It isn't safe and I don't want you to get hurt."

"I suppose, if I did you'd never forgive yourself. It would serve you right."

Josiah rose at that and went out of the dining room, his lunch half-finished. They could hear him in the hall getting into his galoshes and his coat, and then the front door slammed. There was an awkward moment.

"You must excuse Josiah," Flo said. She was sorry she'd said this because it would be so easy for Josiah's mother to reply that it wasn't Flo's place to plead for him.

Instead the reply was quite different. "I suppose I'll

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have to, as I take his money. I've always known that things matter to me that don't matter to him."

There was an interval there—very brief—of a sort of intimacy between the two women which had never existed before, and then Mrs. Madden changed the subject. "If you find the sweater too big for the baby he'll grow into it soon enough."

"I don't think it'll be too big," Flo answered. "I'll try it on him before I take him out this afternoon."

For a while after this it didn't really matter if the trolley line wasn't safe, because nobody could use it. There was the worst snow fall of the winter and the company snow plow was found to be in need of repair, and it was the only plow fitted to the tracks. By the time the necessary parts had been delivered there was a strike of the employees for higher pay. By the time this was adjusted the patience of the travelling public had been strained to the breaking point. The local paper printed a whole issue about nothing else, filling up several pages with letters from almost everyone in town, and running an editorial in big black type with a black border round it, as if it was somebody's funeral.

What with losing the suits and all, the company was pressed for money and tried to borrow it. Josiah explained to Flo why they couldn't. Some years ago, he told her, a bill had been passed in the Massachusetts legislature over the governor's veto. This bill limited the borrowing power of railroads. Its existence made a good excuse for the banks to refuse the loan. Flo didn't understand it really, but that was the way it was. There were a great many people around who owned stock in the

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company. They were glad enough to sell their stock, finding an unexpectedly ready market, though at a low price. Flo knew about this from the woman who ran the beauty parlor. She owned fifty shares, and had parted with them at a loss not too great. It was the case of the wealthy widow, Mrs. Smith—Mrs. Madden's friend—which dealt the trolley line its final death blow.

Mrs. Smith was well liked despite her sharp tongue and odd ways. She had a niece who lived some ten miles out. The niece's husband ran a dairy farm. Every Saturday regular as clockwork Mrs. Smith made use of the transportation the trolley line afforded to visit her niece. She always went on this expedition well heeled with a bag of goodies and trinkets for the children. Her clothes, from the scrap heap though they appeared, were long and voluminous. The trolley didn't go all the way to the farm but within walking distance. She alighted from it at the nearest point, doing so in her usual leisurely manner. The motorman—a new one—evidently didn't know who Mrs. Smith was. He didn't wait long enough, but started the car while her skirts were still entangled in the step. She fell and was badly bruised and an ankle was broken. No one had ever heard of Mrs. Smith's ankles before or known she had them. They heard plenty now. She sued the company in real style. Why, she even tried to persuade Judge Anders to take the case! But he wouldn't, of course, being retired. She got the next best lawyer and won hands down. The trolley line couldn't pay. You can't squeeze blood out of a turnip.

There were bankruptcy proceedings and a receivership. The receivers ran it very badly indeed, and

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finally the property was auctioned off as junk and real estate. Meanwhile a fine new company came in and put a branch line through which served the whole territory. This new line was part of a big railroad. It seemed this road had been wanting to put a branch line through here for a long time. Now was their chance.

This new line was safe. They had the newest kind of cars and you could go almost anywhere in one minute flat. Josiah, being a politician, rode in the first one to make the full trip and Flo went with him. He was invited to a dinner of railroad magnates who came down especially for the ceremony. It was a regular banquet, so Josiah said, with speeches. It was held at the Lindsay House. Flo hadn't been inside the place since her marriage but she guessed it was still the same. It looked the same from the outside. She wouldn't have minded going to the banquet if they'd had ladies present but it was just for men. It was too bad Flo hadn't been invited, because she got along well enough with men. It was women that bothered her.

Any one of the disasters which fate had decreed for the old trolley line could have been weathered. It was only in the aggregate that the trouble had loomed so great. But why call it trouble? The eventual benefit to the little city was indisputable. You must learn to take the long view in such matters, as Josiah was learning to take it. You couldn't make an omelet without breaking eggs, Judge Anders told him, and so Josiah deliberately hardened his soul—a process not too painful, as Josiah's soul had never been unduly soft.

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He had laid himself wide open for triumph, and the triumph had come, including those highly negotiable securities which had seemed to him in anticipation a comparatively minor factor. In a way, they were not so minor. He kept them in the privacy of a safe deposit box for which he had before found uses. He kept them—that was it—he couldn't dispose of them, negotiable as in themselves they were. He clipped his coupons in Boston. The money the clipping brought him made a welcome addition to his income, though even this was an addition not to be noted too blatantly. He had received these securities in exchange for a large bloc of stock he had acquired here and there and had found to be of little value.

Nothing changed on the surface—not his way of life nor anything he did. There was a period here when Josiah seemed to sink into a thick soup of living. It was to his credit that he never appeared to flounder, but merely slowed his normal pace. Call it a juice—his own if you like—and he might have been stewing in it. The shadows which he had always chosen seemed suddenly unduly dark. But from them he must be able to reach out, and now he couldn't. Power slips or grows. Josiah had the uneasy sense that his might be slipping. He felt himself placed on a shelf a little to one side, and yet it was a shelf convenient enough to the hand of God! Was he merely waiting there for the powers on high to use him again when it suited their august fancy?

Josiah wasn't any Max Keg, to be placated with a few dollars, to be flattered into a sense of his own consequence by being sent occasionally on unsavory errands

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or trusted with minor secrets! Max Keg was the young man who had been the other witness at Josiah's wedding. Up to the time when Josiah had discovered him as an underling he had been rated in the town about as worthless as any of its citizens who were able to keep themselves out of jail. He had never held a job for long—not even in the poolroom brushing off the tables nor in the bowling alley setting up the pins. Max had worked in a garage, washing cars and in a store delivering groceries. He was apt to wash the wrong cars and get the grocery orders mixed. He never got Josiah's orders mixed. But then he listened to Josiah with a concentration born of hero worship. He gave up smoking his cheap cigarettes because Josiah didn't smoke. He washed his hands and behind the ears because Josiah was clean. He patterned himself on his master and possessed like him the gift of silence. It was quite sure that Josiah didn't pattern himself on the Judge or on that other sponsor, Mr. Samuel Hopkinson Eldridge. He learned from such men what there was to learn but there was nothing craven in his attention. In fact there was an element of conflict.

They wanted him to be their man, and he had no wish to be anyone's man but his own. They wanted him to run for office so that, in it, he could do their bidding. He couldn't see it that way, and was called short-sighted. Perhaps he was. But he'd started on a certain line and intended to hold it. He would be willing to compromise only if the compromise were conducted on an equal level.

Some men attained high places because they were strong, so the dentist Dr. Cohen had once told him—

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just because of that. And some, so Josiah thought, because they were willing to be weak. Why, there'd been a man recently who had been set in the highest place the land afforded, merely to handle other people's fiery chestnuts! But Josiah wasn't looking for a paragraph in the history books. Men in public office were spoiled with praise and with abuse—too much of both. Josiah intended to have none of it—only the shadows and reaching out. This Yankee steadfastness of purpose annoyed his mother, mystified Cohen and irritated Judge Anders. It rather pleased Josiah that he held the Judge in the palm of his hand and that the Judge doubtless knew it.

Anders had as good a reason for keeping silent as Josiah had himself—even a better one—the old man's fall, should it come, being from a greater height. There were heights and heights, some of them not lethal at all. A fellow like Max Keg, for instance, could turn upon a patron and have little to lose but his own questionable skin. Josiah couldn't turn but he could find out where he was at, he finally decided, using for this purpose a sharp and unexpected frankness. He'd grown tired of his shelf, and if he were supposed to stay there forever he had the right to know it.

Judge Anders was again occupying the heaviest of the straight-backed chairs in Josiah's office. The onlooker would never have guessed that two years had gone by since the first of these occupancies. It was rare that time stopped so completely—or seemed to do so. Everything seemed the same. But in truth both men

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were two years older and Josiah, at least, was wiser. He had formed a sort of pattern of himself which he could follow.

"I suppose you wonder," he addressed his visitor, "why I suggested that you drop by."

"I knew I wouldn't have to wonder long," the Judge answered. "You're not given much to beating about the bush."

"No, I guess not." This was part of the pattern with which Judge Anders was already familiar. What followed was a new part: "I've done everything you want and you've done everything you said you would. Now I'd like to know where I stand and if the account's closed."

"I've offered you positions—positions you've turned down."

"They weren't what I wanted. But I'm growing heartily tired of the present situation."

"You're well fixed financially."

"Quite well fixed. Not that we would either of us care to have anyone know it. It's a blind alley—a dead end—and I'd like to go on."

"Just what position do you have in view?" Anders asked him.

"Yours," said Josiah, "when you're through with it. That would suit me nicely. A party can't function without a local leader, and you must be thinking pretty soon of giving up your—your influence. Stop me if I'm wrong."

Anders didn't stop him. In fact he took it without a flicker. "I thought you had something like that in view, though I didn't think you'd admit it."

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"Oh, I can admit things when I'm ready to—"

"So I see. So you think you'd be in line as my successor?"

"Who else is there?"

"No one of your particular ability. But ability's only part of it in a place such as this. May I say that you don't possess the background?"

"You'll have a long search, Judge, in this town, to find any man whose background is as good as yours!"

"You flatter me. And I'm a little surprised you want the job. It's a nice hobby for me, being the local boss—gives me something to do with my time—but for you, a young and active man—"

The Judge was letting him down, letting him down easy. Josiah was perfectly aware of this, and wasn't too surprised. He hadn't counted too much on being handed the Judge's job on a platter, all nicely garnished with fresh parsley, but he wasn't through with finding out a few things if he could—and he thought he could. With any information he could gain he could act accordingly.

"It's just because I am a young and active man," he cut it on the Judge. "I could make of such a job something a little different, and then I could go on from there. You don't have to do that—you've been on."

"A nice distinction, Madden, but valid. I have always admired the neat way your reason works. In dealing with matters within your comprehension you rarely make a mistake."

Josiah looked at him. There had been a slight change in the man's tone. "But in matters outside it?" Josiah asked.

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"Well—you can't understand everything."

"That's natural enough. Some things have never been brought to my attention."

"And it's hardly for me to bring them there!"

This same changed tone, and an odd expression in the small pouched eyes. Or it seemed odd to Josiah who had never noted it before. It was, in the first place, genuine. It was kindly. It was a little regretful. It was the sort of look the old man might have had for Josiah if his admiration for Josiah's mother had taken a more definite turn. It wasn't at all the look with which one politician regards another, especially when that other has just admitted his own designs upon the throne.

"You can do me a favor, if you like," Judge Anders said suddenly.

"Of course—"

"Run for mayor the next election."

"Why—it's hardly what I had in view!"

"I know that as well as you do but I don't quite see how you can refuse."

"Neither do I," said Josiah. He recognized defeat when he met it.

That was the first defeat. The second was even more concrete. In a strongly Republican section of the country, in a strongly Republican period of that country's political life, the Republican candidate Josiah Madden, ran close with the winning candidate but lost in the final count. Josiah hadn't wanted to be mayor. But he hadn't knifed himself. He wondered if the Judge had done so, 'giving him in this manner the final thrust. What was the term used in bull fighting when the toreador kills the bull? Josiah couldn't think of the

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exact phrase but this was what had happened to him.

No, this was hardly fair. The Judge wouldn't do a thing like that. What object would there be in it? It was merely that, taking victory for granted, no one had exerted himself sufficiently. Yet everyone else on the ticket had got in. It was just Josiah who had failed to make it. If Josiah could have been two people instead of one, on the side lines and as a separate entity up for election, he could have put himself in. His place was in the background. There he would have learned what was really going on. Something had, which now eluded him.

For an off year the vote was heavy. That was the women. There was an exceptionally large registration of women. Something should have been done to get these new voters in line—the voters who had never bothered to vote before. But it wasn't thought necessary, because most of them came from Republican families and it was axiomatic that women voted along with their families. This time it didn't work that way. It was the women who had done Josiah in, secretly and without talk, and deliberately too. It must have been deliberate because the defection was so well organized. You would have had to have an ear very close to the ground in order to have discovered it in advance. And what could Josiah have done had he known? He didn't have an easy way with women mostly, in spite of being such a handsome man. Men he had cultivated sedulously but with women his manner was cold, with a sort of inner arrogance towards what it was plain he considered the lesser sex.

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The Judge could have managed it. The Judge was quite a ladies' man still. He would have been perfectly at home in any sewing circle in the country. But he hadn't put himself forth for Josiah in any such way. He admitted however that it must have been the women who had turned the scales against the chosen candidate.

"What am I supposed to have done?" Josiah asked. "Gone around raping 'em?"

The Judge laughed. "Do you think they'd have voted for you if you had?"

"That depends. But it might have supplied the reason why they didn't! It's a fine kettle of fish when the votes of a few women who've never bothered to come to the polls before and don't know anything about politics and never will can turn an election. Not that I'm not satisfied with the result, of course. . . ."

Josiah was satisfied—even relieved—but he wasn't quite happy about things. There was a phrase somewhere in the secret reaches of his memory—not the bull-fighting phrase, which escaped him wholly, but one he had heard at some time and not liking, had buried very deep. He knew now on what ground he stood but he didn't know of what the ground was formed. This phrase would have had a clarifying value. Maybe there was more than one. But it didn't matter as even one lay beyond his recollection.

"What have they got against me?" he asked the Judge. "Was it the bootlegging? Was it—well, one or two other matters? Those things weren't generally known but there could have been a case made of them—a pub-

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lic case which we could have answered. This was something so private that it couldn't be spoken of even in a whisper."

"Very private," the Judge affirmed.

"You know?"

The Judge inclined his head ever so slightly.

"Then for God sake tell me!"

"Not so fast, my boy, not so fast—"

Josiah didn't care how much the Judge put him off. He was going to find out exactly what was wrong. "Do you remember an evening quite a while back? We were in this place here talking and you asked me if I'd run. You put it as a personal favor."

"Yes, I remember perfectly. You'd just said you wanted to take over when I was through and I had told you that you didn't have the background. You were rather inclined to argue."

"I guess you thought I had my nerve!"

"Nerve's all right. I like it—if it's supported by fact."

"Mine wasn't?"

"Not wholly. You could get into the state assembly any day you felt like it, or even the state senate. But there are two jobs you could never have. One of them is mine and the other—well, your defeat is sufficiently recent to need no emphasis."

"And you knew this all the time?"

"I suspected it. I was rather interested in having my suspicions verified."

"You must have been damned interested if you'd take a chance on putting a Democrat in the mayor's office just to prove it!"

The Judge smiled. "I was a Democrat once myself

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you may recall. I'm not as scared of them as some men are."

"Oh, I'm not scared of them," said Josiah, "but all that's beside the point."

"The point being?"

"This black mark against me. In fairness to myself I've got to know what it is."

"And I suppose you think that as a friend I've got to tell you?"

"Something like that—"

"Perhaps it's because I am a friend and value the friendship, and have no wish to jeopardize it—" The Judge cut himself short. Josiah waited. "Well," the Judge went on at last, "I suppose you think that's beside the point, too."

"A little," said Josiah. The Judge was looking at him and he met the look. "You've taken my word before, haven't you?"

"Why yes. In fact we've traded our mutual and unsupported word on a number of occasions."

"Have we either of us been cheated?"

"No."

"I'll give you any word you want if you'll tell me the truth."

"It won't do you a dime's worth of good, I'm afraid."

"That's for me to say. You know I never wanted to be mayor. I ran as a favor to you."

"So you've said."

"Yes," said Josiah, "I've always felt I'd be glad enough to pick a mayor, but I wouldn't be one." The sound of his own voice saying this brought Josiah up sharply. He'd been searching his memory for a familiar

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phrase which would make all things clear. No, not exactly, but it led to something else, to another phrase which had been hidden away even more deeply.

Suddenly he remembered an evening in Perley's drug-store, and the druggist working over his little packages of white powder and talking to him in speech so low that it hardly carried above the slight rustling sound caused by his labors. "I might pick a mayor but I wouldn't be one," Josiah had said. "You might never get to be one," Perley had answered. "Why not, if I wanted to?" "Flo Gerrity. Folks here don't like Flo very much." There it was! "Folks here don't like Flo very much."

It was on that same evening that Josiah had come to his final decision to marry. Folks would like Flo better if he married her. He had thought it would solve everything. It had evidently solved very little. Because this must be the thing the Judge was so hesitant to tell him. But Josiah wasn't sure yet, and he had to be.

"It's because you are my friend—just because of that—that you must tell me what's wrong. I think I know but I'm not sure, and I've got to be."

"I see. You leave me no choice."

"None."

Judge Anders rose from his accustomed seat and walked over to the window. The view from it wasn't very prepossessing, but it was as if the Judge must look at something to take him away for a moment from Josiah's waiting eagerness for sentence. Perhaps his former years on the bench had taught him a certain technique for strength which he now must follow. A court room wasn't very beautiful either. But at least it

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had a dignity which this present sight quite lacked. Some court rooms had an architectural grandeur. Small New England cities of the type this was didn't go in much for grandeur—architectural or otherwise—especially in their non-residential quarters. The shops were shabby and at this hour for the most part closed. The lunch room on the corner was still open, but not invitingly, not to foster human appetite. The proprietor had set out his garbage cans for morning emptying and a thin cat was investigating one of them. In the distance the brick or iron factory chimneys were putting forth thin columns of smoke against the night sky. The fires they served were banked till morning. This view with which the Judge seemed so concerned was presented to him in part by the rather inadequate system of street lighting and in part by a cold and waning moon. At last he turned from it, looking at Josiah with that odd expression, half tender, half quizzical, genuine, kindly and regretful, which he seemed to reserve to accompany matters which he hesitated to bring to the young man's attention.

"I'd cut my own tongue out rather than say this to you if I didn't think so highly of you! It's your wife."

It was Josiah's mood now to cross to the window. "So I thought. But I had to be sure. She *is* my wife, though I know that in the past she was rather—well—unfortunate."

"That's it. She *is* your wife. You've given her a status which many people in a place like this—particularly the women—don't think she deserves. You've made her respectable, thereby lessening the value of the asset which is the only one to which most women

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can cling. Don't misunderstand me. I personally find Mrs. Madden a very agreeable young woman. She doubtless makes you an excellent wife—"

"Can't a man be left to pick a wife for himself?" Josiah cut in.

"Within rather wide limits—yes. When you married Flo Gerrity you overstepped those limits. She would never be accepted here in an official position. You could never be, with her by your side, the most important man in the town. Somewhere else where her past wasn't known it wouldn't matter. In a big city she could remain in the background, not helping perhaps but not hindering. There people haven't time to look at you so close. This community is too small. You admit she's been unfortunate, and much of her misfortune has taken place in this very spot. The years may change her. Ten, fifteen, years from now she might be divested of her past as completely as she might be of a soiled garment. In fact I think that's more than possible, as she's not unduly sensitive and she's not a fool. But that's rather beside the point as we're dealing with the present."

"I married her," said Josiah, "because I thought it would fix things."

"You mean for her—because of the child?"

How had the Judge spotted that one? Fortunately, Josiah junior had been a little late in coming. Hardly anyone had noticed the exact date. But the Judge was uncanny. There were times when he almost made Josiah's blood run cold. He was familiar with a side of life and had a view of it embodying a sophistication to which the younger man was unaccustomed. He was stirred out of his usual reticence.

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"I meant fix things for myself, mostly," he answered finally.

The Judge smiled. "Forgive me for crediting you with the higher motive! We are so often tricked by our virtues."

"I thought it was our sins—"

"Are there such things?" If there were, Judge Anders ought to know. There were many rumors of the wildness of the man's youth. But by now all that had left but the faintest of aromas. And any sin he had ever committed had certainly not blossomed into marriage or its necessity. The wife who had died had been a veritable pillar of the virtue he was inclined to malign. "A man's personal life—his private conduct—is his own," he continued, almost answering Josiah's thoughts about him. "You can call it hypocrisy if you like. But hypocrisy has a value, especially among the Puritans, whose zone of privacy covers considerable ground. There are so many acts they do not perform in public."

Josiah had been pacing the rather narrow confines of his office. He wasn't angry or resentful—after all, he had brought the Judge's words upon himself—and now at least the riddle was solved. That was a satisfaction in itself, though the weight of it was a little heavy. Most weights could be shifted—not this one. Ordinarily the path of learning was a rewarding path to Josiah, and even learning which unearthed unpalatable fact had its compensations. But this was different. His realization of the difference brought him to the old swivel chair at his shabby desk.

"You must always believe that I've spoken as I

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have, only because I think so highly of you," the Judge was assuring him.

"That's all right."

Josiah was not concerned with why the Judge had spoken. He was facing facts which had for the first time been completely brought to his attention. Even his former friend, the druggist Perley, had based his comments on premises quite superficial by comparison. And his mother's earlier attack—"I hear you're going round with that Flo Gerrity"—hadn't tied the whole matter up in a neat package and delivered it to him signed and sealed. He knew what he had done now. He knew where he stood. But he didn't know yet what the next step would be.

"Where do we go from here?" he asked, looking up at his mentor who was still standing.

"You'll have to give me a little time on that. And meanwhile you might as well start packing your belongings. It takes a year to establish a voting residence in most states. I hear you've done pretty well for that insurance company whose local business you handle. They might be glad to use you in their main office. I'll look into it. Later, when you're settled, I'll write a letter to an old friend of mine—that is unless one of us dies first. He's older than Methuselem and even I'm not as young as I once was."

"I don't want you to go to any trouble," Josiah said. There was a bond between him and the Judge which somehow hadn't been there before. "If I'm leaving," Josiah went on, "what about my membership in the City Council?"

"You can resign from that any time. Let the insurance

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company make you an offer first. You're smart enough for that, aren't you—with my help? You can make quite a success of the insurance business if you work at it for a spell. And then—always having something else in view. . . ." The Judge walked over to the door and put his hand on the knob. "Too bad your wife isn't a woman sufficiently remarkable to transcend all the rules. But if she were you wouldn't have got mixed up with her. Not now you wouldn't. Takes age—or at least a different breed of cat. I'll miss you when you're gone, Joe—" The Judge had never called Josiah Joe before—"I'll miss that glum face of yours—having it around. I guess a lot of us will miss you. But you've got some good securities. You can sell them when you land in the big city. You'll likely need the money."

4.

GOING away, Joe?"

"I guess so."

"Going to the big city, eh?"

"That's right. Hate to do it but I need the money."

"Ain't there money enough for you in this town? There always was."

"Some."

"Hope you'll get along in the insurance business."

"The company thinks I will."

"Pretty good offer they made you?"

"Pretty good. I'd have been a fool to pass it up. If it was just me it would be different. But I'm a family man—have a wife and kid. Have to give that boy of mine advantages—the ones I never had. Then there's my mother too—have to look out for her—she always did for me."

"You'll miss her—"

"I guess I will."

"And she'll miss you. She sets a lot of store by you, Joe."

"I know she does. But she'd never be one to stand in my way."

"I know she wouldn't—she ain't that kind. But it's too bad you're giving up politics."

"I'm afraid I'll have to."

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"Yes, it's too bad. We need fellows like you here—fellows who can fix things. That's the trouble with a small place—sooner or later all the smart ones go away, and there's not a damn thing you can do about it!"

"Not a damn thing!"

"I hear tell you're leaving, Joe."

"Yes—going to the city."

"Ain't you taking a chance?"

"Yes, a real chance—eighteen carat!"

"I never knew the fire insurance business was that good."

"Where I'm going it is."

"Lots of fires in the city?"

"Not so many. But lots of protection. And a neat drawing account coming in steady."

"Drawing account?"

"That's money paid in advance against your commissions."

"Well, I guess you've looked things over pretty careful, Joe."

"With a fine-tooth comb! Selling insurance in the big city and showing other men how to sell it—why it's as easy as shelling peas—it is for me anyway."

"So you're out of politics for keeps?"

"That's right—"

"I guess you'd have to be where you're going—no Republicans in that place."

"Not very many."

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"Well, don't forget us, Joe."

"I won't."

"When do you start, Joe?"

"Friday by the nine o'clock."

"Nine ten, ain't it?"

"That's right."

"Don't you figure Friday's unlucky?"

"One day of the week's the same as another."

"So you're out of politics for keeps?"

"That's right."

"I know. You told us so in your resignation from the Council. We just could hardly believe it, and won't—not till we see your grave being filled up!"

"I guess you'll have to believe it."

"It's a great game, Joe, a great game—"

"Nonsense! I only ran for mayor as a favor to a few here who wanted me. And then I got licked."

"Is that why you're getting out?"

"I wouldn't say that exactly. But I was foolish, and I don't take any satisfaction in being foolish."

"One thing being foolish and another thing being a quitter. You're no quitter, Joe!"

"But I know quitting time when I see it. Get as far as you can get and then—well—the whistle blows. The whistle blows and you set down your tools."

"I see, Joe—I see how it is. The way you put it, I'd almost believe you. You weren't foolish—don't think it. But don't be foolish where you're going, Joe."

"Thanks for the warning—"

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"Say, Mr. Madden—I got that job with the Judge."

"That's fine, Max. What does the Judge aim for you to do?"

"Run his car mostly. Some car! Gee whiz. That engine don't make no more noise than a clam would sittin' on a mud-flat! And the power under that hood—scary, that's what it is! I'd run that baby without gettin' paid for it. He wants other things too—any little thing—you know. And I have to sleep there."

"In his house up the hill?"

"No, a nice room over the garage. His housekeeper, she showed it to me and says I was to keep it neat and be sure to bring my laundry up the hill Sunday night. One sheet, two towels and anything I might want washed. Sheets on the bed—can you beat that? And a shower like they have in Mike's gym, with cement sides. All my stuff kept clean for nothing. I have a coupl'a silk shirts I wouldn't bring her. I'll take those to the Chink same as always."

"When she mends your clothes, Max, be careful what's in the pockets."

"Don't make me laugh, Mr. Madden. My lip's split. Never fear, I'll keep outa trouble!"

"Yes, be careful if you can't be good. And don't have Maisie hanging round the garage. The Judge's housekeeper might not like it."

"Maisie? That slut! Me and Maisie's all washed up long ago. Regular bachelor—that's what I'll be. Pichers tacked on the wall. I got some swell pichers—sent for them from an ad in a magazine—hot stuff. And I'm getting me one of these crystal radio sets. But it's only for a while like you said—you'll send for me—"

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"I'll send for you when I need you, Max."

"Remember! And meantime anything you want I should attend to here—

"There isn't a thing, Max. I'll often think of you, holding hands with the housekeeper—"

"That old sourpuss! Look, I brought you a present, Mr. Madden. It's real ostrich skin, the man said—imported—and your initials—they put those on. You can keep your money and your car license and everything."

"Why Max!"

"I'm glad you came to see me, Madden, and told me a little of your plans. I think you're wise."

"I hope so, Eldridge. You see when this company made me their offer I was hardly in a position to turn it down."

"Quite so. Where you were you'd gone just about as far as you could go. Persuading you to stay would have been a crime, just because you could be useful on occasion—useful to some of us. But not to yourself. Not sufficiently so to warrant the personal sacrifice. You deserve better than that and I'm confident that in the future—"

"No telling what the future'll bring! Meanwhile we can't always do what we want to do. If I were a man of means it might be different, but as it is I have a living to make."

"Yes, of course. Sorry you didn't run for the state senate—I think you could have made it."

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"Maybe. But Boston's not the place for me, nor the state senate either. Besides, you won't be there."

"Where did you hear that?"

"Oh—some place. The Assembly—the Senate—they were just stepping stones for you. For me they wouldn't have been. You'll be in Washington. I wouldn't be."

"You're right. All my family seem to land in Washington sooner or later."

"If I were related to you I likely would myself."

"Oh good Lord! If your name was Eldridge I pity the country!"

"Why so?"

"With you running it?"

"There's been worse men than me running it."

"I'll give you my hand on that one! Yes, I expect to be in Washington next year. Come down there some day when you can spare the time and I'll show you round."

"I think where I'm going is more my meat. Get with a big state and stick with it!"

"Is that one of the Madden blueprints for success?"

"I didn't know there were any."

"Not that you'd admit. I understand from Judge Anders that everyone in your home town thinks you're quitting politics."

"I have created that impression a little. But in a way it's true, isn't it? For a while I'll have to give all my time to the fire insurance company, if only to justify their judgment in having made me the offer they did."

"You're priceless, Madden, but I wouldn't wish to change a hair on your head. Absolutely priceless!"

"Oh I guess I have my price—but it's high."

"And getting higher?"

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"Much higher, Eldridge."

"I'd rather gathered that. It was a chilly day for the Indians when the Yankees landed where they did."

"Aren't you a Yankee yourself?"

"Naturally, I'm a Yankee. That's why I dare to criticize them so freely."

"Hello, Madden—"

"Hello, Genarro. How are things with you?"

"I can't complain. Hear you're leaving us."

"That's right."

"Too bad. Things won't be the same without you here."

"Oh, I don't know. I doubt if the changes will be noticeable at all."

"I hope you're right. Too bad you're leaving and too bad you wouldn't come in with me. There's money in my racket—real money—not just chicken feed."

"I know there's money in it—"

"You *should* know! But you got out of it before it really started."

"Too risky for my taste."

"That's what I don't see. You don't strike me as a man who's afraid of risk."

"There's risks and risks. Besides, Prohibition'll be over one of these fine days, and then where'll you be?"

"I'll attend to that when the day comes. I could use a fellow like you, Madden—smart—influential. Why, I might even give you a partnership."

"I appreciate the offer but I'm already suited."

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"No offense."

"None."

"Say, I've been having a bit of trouble with your old friend Perley."

"How so?"

"He has the nerve to kick at the quality of stuff I bring in—says he could do better himself—right in his own place."

"I don't doubt that. Why don't you make a deal with him?"

"What kind of a deal?"

"Put it up to him—let him build the stuff if he says he can. It would be cheaper that way, and better. It's an idea, isn't it?"

"It's sure an idea! You see it's like this—I can't afford to buy the best stuff for that joint of his. The customers won't pay for it. But I can't make him see it. And the man I put in in this territory don't get along with him at all."

"Why don't you retire Perley on a pension and get another druggist? There are plenty of them hanging round loose."

"I'd thought of it, but I need Perley. He's known here and well liked. Getting a man of my own would look a bit fishy."

"Maybe it would. Well—watch your step."

"I have—up to now. And good luck where you're going. If you ever change your mind—"

"About what?"

"About anything, why, let me know. If you were a drinking man, I'd buy you a drink—right off the boat."

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"You bought me a drink once—remember? A whole magnum of champagne—three and a half quarts, I think that is—the day I got married."

"So I did—so I did. You think of everything!"

"It isn't going to be the same here with you gone, Madden. I won't have anywhere to come to evenings."

"You'll find a place. Oh I didn't tell you—I rented this office to a lawyer. He's going to paint it up a little and move in next week. I'll tell him to leave the door on the latch for you."

"But it won't be the same. Fixing people's filthy teeth all day and then having nowhere to come to afterwards—I don't know what I'll do."

"You'll get along."

"Yes—somehow. Your leaving politics doesn't make sense—no logic in it."

"If you're looking for logic, politics is the wrong place to look, isn't it?"

"I'm not sure—I wish I were. I might have the answer eventually if you weren't leaving. It's like being interrupted in a laboratory experiment. And now I'll never have the chance to prove the thing—not without you over my head, conferring secretly with this man and that man, shaving the laws you never studied down to a size acceptable to a lawless country."

"But you can't tell people everything you do! You wouldn't tell a patient everything you were doing with their teeth, would you? Frighten 'em out of a month's growth—"

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"That would depend on the patient. But the cases are not the same. You see, Madden, I'm a Jew—"

"I know you are—"

"I'm a Jew, and I have walked in the secret paths because, I've had to—and my father before me—you choose such ways deliberately. That's something else I shall now never get to the end of."

"Am I supposed to stick around here just to satisfy your curiosity? I'm free to leave."

"Of course you're free. That's it. You've always been so free you don't know what it means!"

"Well, Mother—"

"Well, Josiah—"

"I guess I'll have to be going along now."

"I guess you will. It's most eleven o'clock. Got all your fixings ready?"

"All ready. The van comes in the morning first thing. They figure to land everything Saturday sometime."

"How will you be Friday night?"

"Oh we'll go to a hotel."

"Flo will like that."

"Yes."

"About Flo, Josiah, I just wanted to say she's turned out better than I had any right to think she would. Keeps her house nice, and the boy. I know she has help, but even so. Things haven't been so easy for her some ways. And don't think I've talked against her!"

"I know you haven't—"

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"Sometimes I catch myself feeling kindly towards her. I wouldn't if I were younger but when you get my age you look at things a little different somehow. I notice she's real sensible with the boy. You were the one who started going round with her—I mean you didn't have to unless you had a mind to."

"No, I didn't have to. I guess I didn't have to marry her."

"I don't see what else you could have done. You always do your duty, Josiah."

"I was raised that way."

"I tried to raise you that way. You're not too particular about some things—selling liquor—putting that trolley company out of business—and maybe other things I never heard about. But I suppose that's your way of getting ahead."

"I didn't know you knew about the liquor—"

"I don't argue when it'll do no good. And I expect you knew what you were doing, Josiah. You ought to. You're smart enough. I expect you know what you're doing now. Charles Anders—he says it's the best thing."

"So he said to me. I'm glad you've got him to turn to."

"I don't figure to turn to him."

"He'd be glad—"

"I know he would. But it would be the other way round most likely. I'm younger than he is and a sight more active. He's losing his grip. A man does that when his wife dies."

"Sometimes I think he'd like to go before the minister again."

"Sometimes I think he would. But it takes two to go before a minister."

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"He might get you round to his way of thinking."

"I guess I can stand out against him. Wouldn't I look foolish, at my age? I do better right here. Charles thinks a sight of you, Josiah."

"I know he does. I wouldn't be where I am now if it weren't for him."

"No, I guess not. Well—"

"Well—"

"You'll write sometimes?"

"I'll write—"

"Put a shovel of coal in the kitchen range and turn down the drafts before you go."

"I will. Don't take it so, Mother. I'll be back some day."

"What would you be back for?"

"I don't know yet. Just a feeling."

"You might come back at that! I couldn't be buried right and proper without you here."

"I didn't mean it so."

"I know you didn't. Goodbye, Josiah."

"Goodbye, Mother—"

"He's in that room there, Mr. Madden—the door where the Deputy's standing. Glad this happened before you left town—if it had to happen, I mean. He wants to see you so bad and he hasn't got long. He won't have to go on trial—that's one thing. It would have been bad for a fine man like him."

"Yes, it would have been bad. I came quick as I could."

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"We been all evenin' trying to reach you."

"I know. My mother has no phone and my wife didn't think where I was."

"Funny business, a man like that shooting himself. Why didn't he take an overdose of some of his pills? That's what the Doc said."

"It all happened too fast, I guess."

"Yes, too fast. He killed Genarro and then he turned the gun on himself."

"Well, here I go—poor old Perley—what's he want with me?"

"There he is, Mr. Madden—"

"Well, Perley—"

"Oh, it's you—"

"Yes, it's me."

"Better come close—I can't talk so good. There—that's better. You'll have to wait a minute."

"I'll wait—"

"Water. Thanks. Once you told me it was all over. Now I tell you the same thing—"

"Don't say that, Perley! You'll be all right by morning."

"Sure I will—by morning. You were a long time coming."

"I was visiting my mother and she has no phone."

"You always cover yourself—not being around."

"Pay no attention, Mr. Madden, he doesn't feel good."

"Why did you tell Genarro I would make the stuff?"

"He told me that, Perley—he told me. Not that you would, exactly, but that you could. He said it was your idea, and he was thinking of making a deal with you."

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What I said was, why didn't he get another druggist? Just to steer him off, I said that—just to keep him quiet—”

“You didn't tell him—you didn't put the notion in his head?”

“Why no, Perley—no. I'm surprised at you, taking any stock in what a man like that tells you I told him—”

“Pay no attention, Mr. Madden—”

“He said you told him to put it up to me, but if you say you didn't—well I guess I'll have to believe you—”

“Sure you will—”

“You see, Madden, you and I got along all right. But your leaving wasn't anything I'd counted on. And that Genarro—that foreigner—he was no one for a white man to do business with.”

“I never had any trouble with him—”

“You could do business with the Old Nick himself if it suited you—”

“Don't encourage him to talk, Mr. Madden—”

“Oh, let him speak his piece—”

“Yes—why not? Let me speak my piece—what's the difference? Me with a doctor of pharmacy degree—graduating *cum laude*—and down to fixing rat poison right in my own store! That's how he wanted it—right in my own store. I'd rather be dead, I said. So I am dead—or will be before morning. But he was dead first. Just him and me. Him. Then me. First things first, I always say. And you not mixed up in it at all, Madden. He didn't know I had a gun back of the cash drawer.”

“I don't know why he didn't. Most storekeepers have one.”

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"Well, he just didn't. Didn't think I'd have the nerve for it. I kept it there loaded. Never used it before. Never had good reason to. But it wasn't because I couldn't. My pappy taught me to use a gun, killing woodchucks in the south acre—they ate the cabbages. Fact is, I can hit a closer mark than Genarro could. His gun went wild by the time he got it working. As for me, I'd have done myself in neater but I guess I wasn't feeling so good."

"I'm sorry, Perley."

"No need to be. You're not mixed up in it. And if I want to blow a few heads off—"

"You'll really have to go now, Mr. Madden. The doctor said to keep him quiet."

"I'll go—"

"Wasn't it lucky I got that prescription refilled when I did? Just as if I'd known almost."

"How could you have known?"

"I couldn't. Mr. Perley was such a nice man. You knew him real well, didn't you, Joe?"

"Yes, of course—"

"Fancy—shooting yourself—ugh! It gives me the cold shivers just to think of it."

"He must have had his reasons, Flo. He must have got mixed up in something he couldn't get clear of any other way."

"I heard he was selling liquor in his back room—doing a big business too. Liquor—I don't know—it never suited me too well—makes a woman look old

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before her time—and as for a man—you can't trust a man who drinks. He'll say one thing when he's feeling high and another thing when he isn't. But if Mr. Perley wanted to sell a little liquor, I don't know why he should have died because of it. And you knew Mr. Genarro real well, didn't you?"

"Not well, exactly, but I knew him. A man in my line has to know people."

"I expect that'll be true even in the insurance business."

"I expect it will. Fact is, I saw Genarro just the other day—asked him what he planned to do when Prohibition was over—which it will be sometime. I recall he said he'd attend to that when the day comes. And now he won't have to. He hasn't any problem that way. Say, Junior, keep quiet!"

"Yes, Junior, we're going in to have dinner in the dining car in a little while—the great beautiful dining car—and you can have some ice cream. I'm glad you got these pullman seats, Joe. It makes a nice trip. Do you know I never rode on a pullman before?"

"There's always a first time."

"I just can't wait to see the city—all the big stores and the theatres and the hotels. I hope I won't look too much like a hayseed."

"You won't. That coat of yours is as good as the day I bought it for you."

"Not quite. But the fur's still elegant. When I get to the city I'm going to take it to one of those places where they remodel furs in the latest style. It won't cost much. And then I'll put it away and have practically a new coat for next season."

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"That's an idea."

"Just think, Joe, walking up the avenue, like the pictures in the magazines—"

"You weren't sorry to leave, then?"

"Sorry! Why should I be? I know it was a lot of work, packing and all, but it was worth it—every bit of it."

Flo in her fur coat on the pullman. She was leaving in style. It was certainly better than being ridden out of town on a rail! She had the satisfaction of feeling that she left behind her a trail of envy and she couldn't be reached by it or injured. She'd done pretty well for herself, taken all in all, so much better than anyone could have predicted she would do.

Joe had his faults—grouchy at times and silent—but he was a good provider. She never had to worry about where the money was coming from to pay the grocery bill. And if she wanted anything for herself or for the boy there was never any question. What man was perfect? There were those from whom she had got more thrills. There had been a boy way back when she was just a kid living with her grandmother. Her grandmother had been so mean—never let her have any fun and raised hell when she came home after nine o'clock. Why come home at all in such case? Why bother? This boy knew a little shack down by the river. There was a cook-stove in it, and bunks. In the winter the hunters used the place but in the summer it was boarded up. You had to know which boards were loose. This was the first boy. There were others later, and then you couldn't call them boys any more except in fun. She got quite a bad name finally and her grandmother

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turned her out altogether. It was after that she'd come North up through Massachusetts and got herself a job, quite by chance you might say, at the Lindsay House. The old woman must be dead by now. Flo had never been back to find out. She didn't wish her any bad luck, but she wouldn't have minded it too much, her being dead. Though it would be nice if her grandmother could know how well she—Flo herself—was fixed. The old woman had predicted such a bad end for her and the prediction was so wrong.

Joe had drawn a sort of map of the place he'd rented in the city. It was called an apartment and had everything handy on the one floor—parlor, dining room, two nice bedrooms and one for the hired girl, and a kitchen at the back. There was a bathroom of course, and an extra wash basin between the two bedrooms. The house had two of these apartments on every floor and an elevator to take you there. It was conveniently located, so Joe said, just a few blocks from the big Democratic club. But Joe wouldn't ever have any use for that, being a Republican. Besides, he was out of politics. The insurance business was much better. Any business that way Joe had done before had been just for nickels, but this would be different. Such a good opening he had, in charge of certain eastern territory. He might have to travel a bit at first. But Flo wouldn't mind. Or would she? She had to admit, if only to herself, that she knew a little too much about travelling men.

The boy could go to kindergarten by next fall—a private one where refined young women taught the children how to behave and to draw pictures and to build things with blocks. They played games and the

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older ones were taken on trips to the zoo and places like that. She'd read pieces about such things in the women's magazines. Thrills weren't everything. Suppose she'd finally married that boy who'd known about the shack, she would be a sort of a gypsy now, eating only when her husband could break into a chicken coop or do a little hunting or get himself a day's work. A gypsy with a parcel of kids dragging at her heels. One child. She had no intention of having any more. But one was nice—especially a boy—it gave marriage a permanence which even a wedding ring, by itself, couldn't equal.

She would never go back to the old life now. And what was there in it anyway? Nothing compared to what she had. Josiah would always take care of her. He'd do that even if he left her. Not that he intended to leave her, though she was perfectly aware that at times he had wanted to and those times would doubtless come again. She knew a good deal about men, but there were some ways in which with Josiah her knowledge didn't help her as it should. Josiah was different from most. She recognized the difference without being able to define it. She couldn't hold him as she could have done in the average case. Yet he wasn't one to run around with other women. In fact he never had been what you'd call a woman-chaser. And that was what you had to watch out for mostly. Her friend who ran the beauty parlor told her that in the big city a man had temptations that way he wouldn't have back home. And you wouldn't be able to keep track of him. If he strayed a bit or stepped out, who would there be to tell you? But Flo wasn't sure she would want to be told.

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Everything was going to be very wonderful. She almost had to pinch herself to know she wasn't dreaming. It was even better than being the Mayor's wife.

As for stepping out, or chances to, that worked two ways. She'd always had those and never taken advantage of them—not since she'd first realized that in Josiah she had a chance of a much better sort. She didn't take much credit for her discretion. She'd learned it the hard way. Besides, she owed something to this beanpole of a man who always did a little more than he said he was going to. That was because he said so little that you'd almost think he was dumb if you didn't know better. He'd married her—just like that—when it wasn't even certain that if he hadn't married her Junior would have had to get along without a father. She'd been sitting with her eyes closed. She opened them to see Josiah's eyes upon her.

"Been asleep, Flo?"

"No, not really."

"Junior's had a nap too."

"I thought he must. He's been so quiet. When do we get in?"

"In about an hour. We'll take a taxi right to the hotel. You're likely tired."

"A little. When we get to the hotel I'll have to see about Junior's supper and getting him to bed."

"When's Hannah coming?"

"Monday. She wanted her Sunday to visit her sister. Besides, she wouldn't feel easy in a big hotel—not a girl like Hannah—she hasn't got the clothes. And say, Joe, speaking of clothes, I have a new dress right in my suitcase."

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"And you'd like to show it off?"

"Well—if we could get the chambermaid to look in on Junior after he's asleep I was thinking maybe—"

"I was thinking the same thing. We'd go down to the restaurant and have something to eat and listen to the music. You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

"I sure would! What is it, Junior? Oh, all right! Say, Joe—"

"Yes?"

"You must love me a lot or hate me a lot, to be so good to me. It's funny, because there are people who don't hate me at all, and yet they wouldn't do for me what you would. It takes all kinds to make a world, doesn't it?"

"I don't hate you, Flo. I think you're cute. Say, better take your handbag with you. I'm going into the smoker for a while."

"What for? You don't smoke."

"There are some men there I'd like to talk to."

"Oh, I see. Naturally I'll take my handbag with me! I want to fix my face."

5.

HOW curious you are to me. Hundreds and hundreds returning home are more curious than you suppose." That was a quotation from the poet Walt Whitman, a copy of whose works Josiah had once picked up from his mother's parlor table, left there by his brother Amos. Josiah had glanced at the book, not admiring it unduly, but those lines—or lines nearly like them—had remained in his memory. Yes, how very curious. . . . It was the people in the city, "hundreds and hundreds" of them, that alone struck him with any sense of wonder. The rest of it—buildings, streets, distances, contrasts—he passed over lightly. It took foreigners to be genuinely impressed with a big American city—people like those, coming in with nothing and seeing money for the first time. Josiah, Yankee that he was, didn't impress so easily. Though he was at moments impressed with himself—and even then his exacting sense of proportion made this go sour too. It was at best an inverted and episodic compliment.

He had proved that he could inspire confidence and he must go on proving it. He must fight his way up among strangers who themselves regarded him as one. His measure would be taken by the yardstick which showed inch by inch that he was no longer such, or—as such—to be resented. It was an undertaking more

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colossal than he had thought. If in the city there was not time for people to look at you so close, it was rather your private affairs with which they were too busy to be concerned. As you presented yourself in person the glance was keen and hard. It was a glance he must learn to counter. And he could. He wasn't a factory boy any more. He wasn't a bootlegger. He would re-enter politics, he now knew, as a gentleman—a hundred per cent American gentleman. Hadn't his mother been a Bently? Wasn't he close to being a high executive in one of the city's largest fire insurance companies? Politics now needed men like Josiah—men of standing—men who inspired confidence.

He wasn't in politics yet of course—not here. He never had been. He was a youngish New Englander from a factory town whose abilities had received the recognition of the main office. Why, he didn't even have a vote here. It was said that every seven years a man changes his skin. It was April again, and on an April seven years ago he had returned from France and marched past the governors of five states and come to a decision about his life. This state where his life was now set was not one of the five at all. The insurance business was a good safe business and he was doing very well for a new man. There were two telephones on his desk and at the corner facing outwards a little brass plate with his name—MR. MADDEN. Only the president and one or two of the vice-presidents and the general manager rated a private office. He and another man shared a secretary. None of this mattered to Josiah. He didn't intend to remain as he was forever.

In his leisure hours he wandered about the city streets,

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as unmarked as a passing spectator at one of the fires against which he insured his clients, but learning what he could learn and storing the knowledge against future need. When his opportunity came he would be ready. Impatience was his danger. Sometimes he felt that he had been catapulted back to the starting line after having run and won a considerable race, and it was not a starting line with which he was familiar. Gradually the strangeness left him. He seemed to be at the beginning and yet he wasn't.

Move slowly and never without intention. Match your own still tongue against the tongues belonging to the rulers who have had more practice in stillness than you have had yourself. Learn to regard the more spectacular items which come to your notice as either commonplace or wholly fabulous. And while learning that, learn to absorb shock without a tremor. And don't forget what you have learned already—never for a moment.

Spectacular items? There were many of these to amaze a man from a homespun environ. More through hearing than seeing. There was a certain gloss now varnishing the stains, but in the past—and the near past at that—this politics of Josiah's had worked its wonders with no sense of decency whatever or even of discretion. It had possessed a strong element of barbarism and Josiah was not a true barbarian, though he might commit upon occasion certain barbaric acts. The Bently blood was good clean blood. Even the Madden blood had been purified by time.

The gloss on politics came slowly, and was yet none too heavy. There were traction problems here as well

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as at home, and franchises granted suddenly and for no public reason. The scale on which such business was transacted, and the almost magic ease of it, made any business with which Josiah was himself rather unduly familiar fade into insignificance. And as for this past—so uncomfortably near—Josiah heard of great banquets, beer-swilling contests, steak-eating contests, whole streets peremptorily roped off merely to give the masses, who were also the voters, something for which to show gratitude in the usual way. Political bosses of this earlier day lit their cigars with twenty dollar bills, bought castles in Europe, owned racing stables, made no secret of the quality of the linings they had obtained for their own pockets. These linings seemed never to wear thin, no matter how swift the horses owned nor how magnificent the largess distributed. These men were like children in a perennial jam closet. They stole the jam and they gave it away so that they might steal more.

Things were not like that now. The actual word, scandal, was rarely spoken save by the reformers who were constantly scratching at the gloss to unveil what might lie beneath it, and Josiah had never been attracted towards reform. Once reforms were started they were hard to stop. Legislation to benefit the poor, for instance—Josiah had never been too greatly in favor of it, even though Judge Anders had once accused him of the beautiful snobbery of poverty. The reformers kicked at some people having everything, but they were always recommending that everyone have everything—always paying heed to the yelps of the incompetent and the hungry squawkings of fledglings

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too unwinged to leave the nest. There was talk of new housing laws and laws to regulate the conditions under which people worked. If you wanted a window in every room and a bathroom in every flat you should be able to pay for it, and what profit could there be in running a factory as if it were a health resort?

The trouble with reformers was that you couldn't depend on either their judgment or their knowledge. Josiah had a great respect for judgment, his own being not without flaw, and he put aside any knowledge that did not come at first hand. Yet reform had its place. You couldn't have things wholly run by despoilers who ignored everything but their own advantage.

It was perhaps fortunate that more than a year had to run before Josiah could in this new state exercise his privilege of citizenship. He was thus enabled to shake himself down into his new shoes and let the leather lose its stiffness. Perhaps the wily Anders had taken this very fact into his calculations, having Josiah's good always at heart. Though he might have been unaware of the varying layers of which his protégé's activities were composed and the extent to which they could function concurrently. There was a surface to them and a depth and something in-between, and they were beautifully designed to keep out the cold. Josiah was strong. He could take punishment as well as give it, and during this year he was taking a good deal. It was odd, the point which bothered him as much as anything—nothing he would have anticipated at all, because he had never liked being conspicuous. But there was a dis-

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inction between this rather negative lot and no one's having the slightest idea who you were! Outside of his office and his apartment house lobby and the restaurant where he ate his lunch and the barber's where he got his hair cut he might have been an unseen ghost, save that a ghost must haunt only the scenes of his former living.

Sometimes Flo talked as though he had come to this strange environment solely on her account—which was true, but not as she meant it—not at all as she meant it. Flo was doing all right for herself and Josiah caught himself resenting her satisfaction and her gratitude, which last was a little hard to bear. So many things were. His faith in himself was somewhat battered—not all the time, of course, but now and then—even his faith in his own precious Republican Party. Judge Anders had once been a Democrat. Josiah had never understood before how that could have happened, but now he did. Anders had been a judge in the court of appeals in the city for many years. If he hadn't been a Democrat he might never have had the judgeship offered to him. But there was more than that to it.

In New England the Republicans could do no wrong, but they were weak in the city, shining only in the reflected glory of their federal power. Josiah's loyalty faltered. Why should he align himself on the losing side? If he'd had pretensions in the direction of Washington it would have been different. No, thanks, he was quite uneasy enough as it was. If politics needed men like himself—men of standing—it became to him clear and still more clear that the Democrats needed them most. The Republicans already had a plethora of such

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men—they were tophheavy with them. Perhaps Josiah couldn't have qualified among them—met the Republican standards—that was another thing. As for the Democrats, men of such a type were rather hard for them to come by, they needed them badly, and need was ever the greatest source of profit. Yet there was a sense, implicit but present—that turncoats were dangerous—a hyphenated breed at best—sooner or later they would come home to roost.

Josiah reached his decision some months before he cast his first vote. It was a difficult decision to make because he knew that sooner or later he would have to admit it the first Democratic vote of his career. Concealment in such matters was always vain. And then the morning following Election Day he received a letter from the Judge. Fingering the paper before reading it, he wondered why his former friend and patron had chosen this moment to approach him. Well, he would soon find out. It was a thick letter—several pages of closely written script. The first line startled him. It was as if you never had to tell Judge Anders anything.

"I take it for granted," Anders wrote, "that when you receive this you will have gone Democratic. In fact I don't see what else you could have done in the city. Don't have it too much on your Yankee conscience. I got along quite nicely as a Democrat, and I believe matters run even more smoothly now. And you'll be surprised how loosely the party lines are drawn. On Election Day they're taut enough but the rest of the time the two machines do a good deal of trading—especially noticeable at the primaries—'You give me a bite of your apple and I'll show you my sore

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toe'—you know the phrase—it applies to the case in hand. Income tax adjustments can best be handled through the Republicans and of course there's always Prohibition. That's quite definitely a Republican offspring—rather an odd one, and hardly a source of pride to its parents. And such high hopes were entertained for it prior to its birth! Now it's a monster—an idiot child both blubbering and dangerous, and coming to be quite a major political issue—one, fortunately, which you know a good deal about. And you have an Irish name—that will help you—what otherwise would you be doing among all the priests—you who were so well baptized in the Congregational Church? Get a good priest in your precinct on your side and you have something. In the city the Catholic Church forms the frame of the whole political picture and please don't forget it. The Protestant churches are too much divided among themselves—they have no real hold on their dwindling supporters. Oh, up town, where the rich go to church and the near-rich—the better conservative elements—but such people are mostly not interested in politics—think them dirty. There are a few weak Republicans who don't know how to get along. I was afraid you might be toying with the notion of riding to power on the horses they can't handle. Small groups are of little use either in money or connections. To say they don't have to be small is too easy an answer. Besides, such people rarely vote save at presidential elections, and still more rarely at the primaries. They talk a great deal, pick over the political menu and criticize the food generally. The notion I think you've adopted—which has grown in you in spite of yourself—is for

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you the sound one. As for this, will you please verify my assumption? Until you do this I can't very well write to the old friend of whom I spoke."

What friend was that? Oh yes, the man who was older than Methuselem. Josiah hadn't forgotten. This was not the first letter which Josiah had received from the Judge, but the earlier communications had been rather pointedly non-political in character. It had been as if the great man wasn't going to have any part in whatever future Josiah might carve out for himself—almost as if he had repudiated his own advice. And now this—clairvoyance and all.

Much of what the Judge had written Josiah knew already, but it was good to get it down in black and white. And perhaps Anders discounted a little the potential power of the Republicans. If the Republicans had voted, it might have made a difference. Just their straight votes, pulling down the levers of these new-fangled voting contraptions straight across the line. As for Prohibition, Josiah didn't need anyone to tell him about that. The Dries wanted its continuance, of course, and many of the bootleggers wanted it. Tony Genarro had been a bootlegger and he had wanted it. The better type—the speakeasy proprietors who would, by character, be eligible for legitimate business—felt it had been forced on them, and looked back regretfully to the day when their restaurants and their bars had operated legally. They hoped that day would come again. They didn't like the gangster element with whom they had to deal, nor the protection they had to pay. Yet they had to sell liquor, because if they didn't their customers would go elsewhere. Josiah himself didn't

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drink and his father had drunk too much. Prohibition wouldn't have stopped the old man. He would have been a steady customer for Perley's back room. No one had to drink if they didn't want to—that was Josiah's opinion of the matter. Josiah's father was dead. So was Perley. So was Genarro. Josiah had escaped in time, for the wages of sin were unquestionably death.

At first Josiah thought he had mistaken the address. A friend of Judge Anders would hardly live in the midst of produce markets and elevated railroad pillars and waterfront lunch rooms. Perhaps the ancient man had fallen on evil days and the Judge didn't know about it. But Josiah discarded this supposition almost as rapidly as he had adopted it. Henry Vliet was still a power and still held an important political post. Everyone who took the slightest interest in city politics knew who he was. He was the grand old man of the Democratic Party, with a reputation which had always seemed somewhat unjustified by anything he had actually accomplished, but so many reputations were. He was notably eccentric—he must be—living in such a neighborhood! The red brick house had seen—obviously—better days, and yet it was neatly painted and clean and fresh. After all, if the old man wanted to have a room there that was his own affair.

Josiah rang the bell—an old-fashioned bell which you pulled instead of pressed. You could hear it reverberating through the nether reaches. And then a quick firm step. The step belonged to an old lady in a black silk dress. It was exactly the dress Josiah's mother would be

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apt to wear on Sunday, though the wearer was older than Josiah's mother.

Her opening of the door revealed a commodious and well furnished hall—distinctly not the ante-room of a rooming house. There was a thick carpet, a hatrack made from stag's horns and a carved walnut table with chair to match.

"What is it?" The question was curt and courteous at the same time.

"My name's Madden. I came to see Mr. Vliet. He asked me to come."

The woman smiled a little—just a little. "Oh yes, he's expecting you. Come in. I'm Miss Vliet, his daughter."

She looked far too old to be anyone's daughter—anyone who still lived—but Josiah could hardly argue the point. He entered at her bidding and stood for a moment with his hat in his hand. He finally hung it on one of the horns.

"Won't you take off your coat?"

"Thank you." He laid this on the table neatly while she watched him, and then followed this anomalous creature down the hall to a room at the rear which was furnished as a library.

There were bookcases with glass fronts, a horsehair sofa with a much carved frame, and tufted horsehair chairs with high backs. It wouldn't have been called a particularly homelike room, and yet Josiah felt strangely at home there. He thought the room was empty until Miss Vliet spoke again.

"Father, this is Mr. Madden. You know—from Judge Anders."

A figure rose from a chair which had concealed it.

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The movement was accomplished with alacrity, as was also the movement forward to where Josiah was standing.

"Yes, Mr. Madden? I'm Vliet. Glad to meet any friend of the Judge."

Josiah, too, had stepped forward. "How do you do, sir?" A handclasp was managed. The old man's hand was muscular. "It was very kind of you," Josiah said, "to ask me to come. Letters of introduction are usually a nuisance."

Vliet chuckled. "I know they are—to both parties. But have a seat."

Josiah's first impression was that this was the oldest human being he had even seen who could still navigate—old as the contents of a mummy case are old. Then he noticed the young shrewd eyes which took him in from head to toe, missing nothing. In his left hand Mr. Vliet held a pair of old-fashioned spectacles. He evidently used them only for reading print, not people. He set them down on the desk.

"Your daughter said you were expecting me. I hope I'm not late—I had a little trouble finding the street. I haven't been in the city long enough to know my way round."

"She wouldn't have let you in if I hadn't been expecting you." Both men could speak of Miss Vliet in the third person, as she had vanished without even a word of farewell. "The Judge writes me you're quite a smart fellow," Vliet went on, "in the insurance business. But I don't think you've come to sell me insurance. They don't take 'em over seventy."

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"Fire insurance is my line—not life. But I haven't come to sell you any."

"No, I don't believe you're foolish."

"Foolish—used so, that's a New England expression."

"Is it? I wouldn't know. I'm a Dutchman—at least my people were—Holland Dutch, not Pennsylvania. You wouldn't appreciate the distinction. They were the crowd that were supposed to have bought the city from the Indians for a string of beads."

"It's a good story."

"Isn't it?" The smile added to the heavy lines of the face. Josiah had never seen a face with quite so many lines, and yet the flesh—what there was left of it—hadn't fallen away from the bones. There were still muscles here, and strong ones. Henry Vliet's face reminded Josiah of those anatomical illustrations of features from which the skin has been removed, showing only the muscles. "There are a lot of good stories. You mustn't pay too much attention to most of them."

"I don't."

"I didn't think you did. Tell me—how's Salem feeling?"

"Salem?"

"Salem Anders."

"I thought his name was Charles."

"He was christened Salem Charles. I always called him Salem because it made him mad. He didn't have a chance to get mad often. If you're a lawyer you can't afford to."

"I'm not a lawyer, so I wouldn't know about that."

"Neither am I. Though they made me a police justice once—had to take the job away from me because I

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wasn't. Reform. A little reform's a good thing, but not too much. I used to be a reformer myself—back, that was, when the town really could do with some of it. No, I was never a lawyer, though most people think I was. I was a carpenter at one time. Then I had a nice contracting business. That got me started. Salem says you had a pretty good start in politics back in your home town—Republican."

"Yes." Josiah hadn't intended to mention his connection with the Republicans for a while yet.

"And now you're a Democrat. There isn't so much difference as people like to think. But you have to have two parties in a country as big as this one. The other side's having a time for itself in Washington just now, but it won't last. It never does. The pendulum will swing and we'll still be sitting here, prettier than ever. At least you will. I'm ninety-eight. I'm counting on the century mark and then I don't care. They've got radio and voting machines and a lot of things I don't like. I'm finding myself a little old to learn new tricks. I keep looking back and not forward. That's bad." And then—quite suddenly—"I understand from Judge Anders that you're in a position to work for a while for nothing."

"Certainly—for a while. I wouldn't expect the Party to hand me a good paying job until I had proved what I could do. You and Judge Anders seem to have had considerable correspondence about me. I'm flattered."

"You needn't be. He recommended you highly and he's generally right. Of course I can't promise you anything—anything at all—not even work you do for nothing."

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"Of course you can't—"

Vliet's next remark was more hopeful. In fact, coming from him, it constituted the promise he had just refused. "But they think I'm pretty harmless so they're apt to do what I say—if they can."

Harmless was the last word Josiah would have applied to this lined and battered patriarch who was treating him with a kind of acid friendliness and measuring him inch by inch.

"What would you be likely to say?" Josiah asked.

"I haven't made up my mind yet. Give me time."

"I certainly wouldn't hurry you. I was merely curious."

"You can be curious as hell as long as you're not inquisitive! That's bad in this business. Do you drink milk?"

"Milk?"

"Yes—milk."

"As a matter of fact, I drink it a good deal. Why?"

"I always have a quart of the stuff brought to my desk at the office every noon. I guess I could find another glass. If you stop by at noon tomorrow I may have some suggestions."

"You didn't have to ask me to give you that much time," said Josiah. "I suppose you'll want me to tell you something about myself, and—"

"You needn't bother," Vliet cut him off. "I always figure that what a man thinks he has to tell about himself can't matter too much. It's what I like about you—you haven't dusted off all the high spots of your career for me to look at. Besides, in your particular case I have all the necessary material."

"Sent you by Salem?"

"Yes—by Salem—registered mail."

"He must have thought it valuable."

"Valuable—or private. He was always quite a card."

"Judge Anders is a great man."

"Oh, I wouldn't call him great exactly, but he can go the distance. They don't make very many of them now that can. The ones who get places have near forbears who've come over in the steerage, or at least been born while their mothers were waiting around at Ellis Island to be let through the gate."

Josiah would have been inclined to refute this a little but he wasn't here for purposes of argument.

"Maybe you're right," he said instead, "though I wouldn't have put it just that way. To get places they have to be tough now. Judge Anders has always had advantages."

"That's it! But his advantages haven't thrown him."

"You believe in coming up from the gutter?"

"No, I didn't say that—I didn't say that at all! Though most politicians will tell you they did, and how their mothers took in washing and they worked in a factory at the age of eight—"

"Twelve," said Josiah.

The two looked at each other. In the look was everything which Josiah had been wise enough not to mention.

"There are usually extenuating circumstances," Vliet said. He rose. "You better go now. If you don't my daughter'll be coming in here and telling you it's my bedtime. And that would embarrass me in front of strangers."

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"I hope," said Josiah, rising too, "the time will come when you won't regard me as a stranger. I'll see you tomorrow at noon. I can drink milk with the best of them."

"I'll tell the boy to bring in an extra quart."

Josiah left, feeling the burden of his opportunity heavy upon him, and yet—by contrast with his host—both young and innocent. The old man might never have accomplished miracles, but there wasn't very much he didn't know which could ever be of the slightest concern to either of them. And in the clear white light shed by this knowledge he, Josiah, would be judged, and would rise or fall. If he fell it would be into some bottomless pit like the fire insurance business. If he rose it would be to that limited and private glory which he most desired. Maybe he could go the distance and maybe he couldn't.

Burdened as he was, he made his way home. There was a crosstown car he could take. It was true he was in a position to work for nothing, but such work would doubtless encroach heavily on the profits of the insurance business, and the difference between carfare and taxi fare was worth saving. It was just such little sums which in the aggregate kept the bank balance where it should be for a man with family responsibilities—a man with a wife and a son and a mother, of whom whatever else he did he must take care.

6.

SOME people were a little afraid of Josiah—not only women, but men too. They trusted him, they had confidence in him, but—at the same time—they didn't turn their back on him—figuratively speaking. Even his former patron, Judge Salem Anders, might have had a faint sense of caution regarding him. But the man who now took Anders' place in the Josiah saga was far beyond the age of fear. He couldn't store in his imminent grave anything Josiah wanted. His sons were dead, his grandsons not in politics, his great-grandsons young men lacking the material for rivalry. As for his daughter, she of the black silk dress, having no sons of her own, she took Josiah to her lonely and maidenly bosom. It was one of those fine admirations not wholly founded on fact, though there was fact about it.

Josiah didn't drink and therefore lead her father into evil ways. He didn't smoke and therefore burn holes in her furniture. He was quiet of manner and speech. She had seen in her time plenty of aspiring politicians who had made their way to the little red brick house in the strange neighborhood and set the doorbell to jangling through it. But none of these had measured with her measures. Josiah did—or what she knew of him. If she had known certain facts which she had no

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means of knowing—Anders' communication to her father having been of a private and registered nature—the shock to her would have been unutterable. The admiration was mutual. Josiah considered Miss Vliet a most unusual woman—had been convinced of it from that first moment when she had so grudgingly admitted him to the Vliet establishment. It was flattering certainly, the way she counted on him, more and more, to protect her honored parent on the various occasions when she couldn't perform the act herself.

There was the day of the laying of the cornerstone of the new clubhouse. Vliet had been asked to handle the golden shovel. Someone had to. But it was a cold January with a light snow falling, and no weather for an old man to be out in—much less digging in the ground! It was Miss Vliet who said she would feel better about the whole project if Mr. Madden were at her father's side. Vliet had an old fashioned overcoat with a sealskin collar, and—as if this were a bit too reminiscent of the Nineties—he wore to top it a very snappy pearl gray fedora hat. He was fussy about his clothes, as well as saving, and had expressed the hope that the felt wouldn't spot. Josiah, devoted bodyguard that he was, produced a large umbrella which he held over Vliet and Vliet's hat during the entire ceremony. Cannibal chiefs were sheltered in such manner. All the bigwigs of the Party were present, and, in addition, a man from Josiah's fire insurance company, impressed mightily. It wasn't quite time yet to have mentioned in business circles Josiah's political connections.

It would seem a little as though Josiah's rise in life went by favor, like kissing. This wasn't strictly so. Or

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at least the favor had considerable support. He was so beautifully available and as a man of standing, was known not to be too concerned for the crumbs that might fall his way. Besides, he came into city politics highly recommended, and with a useful record, though on this you mostly had to take Vliet's word. But you could see that he knew his way around and Vliet hadn't made any mistake in taking him under his wing.

The old man had been better than his half promises, slipping Josiah into work here and there—tasks of a type he wouldn't normally have attained to so soon. He was perfectly willing to take orders, not being in a position yet to give them, except little ones, and bringing to his assignments a spice of action peculiarly his own. A precinct leader died and as there happened to be no one immediately suitable to take his place, Josiah got it. At the time of this cornerstone laying he was slated for ward leadership in the ward of which his precinct was a part.

Insurance was always an excellent background. It became, shortly after this, rather more than that. He had bided his time in mentioning his political connections, but now he let a few words drop around the insurance office and the man from the company who had seen him with Vliet did the rest. Without any overt move on Josiah's part he was able to swing a nice piece of city business in the direction of his own office. Oh yes, an excellent background. It always had been, even back in the old days when the company name had been painted above Josiah's own on the glass half of his door. He sometimes wondered how Dr. Cohen who practiced his tooth-pulling on the floor below was getting along. The dentist had been so sorry to see him leave, but had

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said at the same time that he had voiced his sorrow that Josiah was entirely free to do so.

And now so many of the people Josiah knew were those with whom his association was dictated wholly by self-interest. This was not his fault but merely how things happened. They were a new breed to Josiah. They had a peculiar smooth toughness more deadly than any stripe of it Josiah had met up with in the past. These were the men at the top. The calibre of the lesser party hierarchy surprised him. They reminded him of Max Keg, older and smarter, and in a way more ruthless.

Old man Vliet was an exception. Josiah would have found him congenial company even if the word he was always dropping in his favor had not been so productive. There wasn't any reason to it, why Henry Vliet's word should count so much. But Josiah had long ago discovered that the Democrats in city politics were pretty hard up for men of standing. It was what was known as a seller's market, and Josiah happened to be on the spot. Besides, he knew pretty well the tricks of the trade, or at least the tricks he knew could be easily converted to fresh uses. He hadn't really begun yet to flaunt his talents, to extend himself. The talents and the extension were potentialities which the men above him and the men beneath could only suspect. Achievement—real achievement—was all ahead. It was a nice period in Josiah's career, though he didn't quite label it as such.

Most Republican candidates for city office lost by default. They knew they were doomed and went about their necessary business with the funereal pace of doomed

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men. And yet the Republicans were very strong nationally—stronger and stronger year by year—and there was no doubt in the minds of the more astute that they were encroaching on the city in little ways. This encroachment would bear watching. And there was one man who would bear watching. His name was Carrington, Roberto Carrington, and he was dangerous. He did what he pleased and he said what he pleased. His movements could never be foreseen. He was a Republican, a reformer and a practical politician. The Republicans didn't like him very much—certainly not the conservative element among them—but he had managed to build up for himself a considerable backing. He even had his own nicely oiled little machine, all private, made up of a group of Italians, a sprinkling of liberals and some disgruntled Democrats. He was so young for all this—little more than a boy, really—the boy wonder, with a term in the state legislature behind him and a term in Congress still to run out. He had started in politics before he himself had been old enough to vote. He had undergone no eras of frustration but made constructive use of every moment, obtaining for himself an education and a law degree and powerful connections—really powerful—not just old Henry Vliet and retiring Salem Anders and that heir apparent to the rather tottering Eldridge throne, Samuel Hopkinson Eldridge.

The Republicans, not liking him very much, yet admitted that there wasn't anyone else with whom they stood a ghost of a chance, so they put him up for mayor. The Democrats—that is to say, the organization Democrats—liked him even less than the Republicans did.

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He could meet them on their own ground—slug it out with them blow for blow. Well, stranger things had happened. . . .

Carrington wasn't dependable in the sense the word was ordinarily applied in politics, but he could be depended on to conduct a rousing and vigorous campaign. There would be nothing funereal about it. He had a real talent for finding things out and bringing them forth at uncomfortable moments, and no sense of dignity whatever. He was always excited about something which was none of his business, from the food fed prisoners in the city jail to the conduct of some judge in the state of Wisconsin. He was Don Quixote charging at windmills and he must be defeated at all costs. And this was where Josiah came into the picture. Matters wouldn't have moved for Josiah nearly as quickly as they did move now, save for the credit he received for his part in Carrington's defeat.

Josiah had got his ward leadership, and was feeling pretty happy about it, and naturally was preparing to be very active in the coming election. He didn't have to be warned how dangerous Carrington was. He felt the danger—he felt it in his bones. There was something about the man which for him personally constituted a sort of menace. Certain people underestimated him—thought him funny. Not so Josiah. He regarded him with a mixture of scorn and envy—scorn for his foreign ancestry—it was old Vliet who had said that men who got places had near forbears who'd come over in the steerage—and envy for his quickness of mind and tongue, his education, his connections, his law degree. Where had he come by that white man's

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name, Carrington? It developed that his father had been a little cockney Englishman, his mother an Italian immigrant—both immigrants. Well, that was what old Vliet had said. Roberto Carrington was usefully bilingual, speaking his two languages as though he might call them native. This was characteristic. He seemed always to be everywhere at once and the legion of his opponents had to be constantly looking over their collective shoulders for fear he would bob up in the most unlikely places.

He had plenty to say always—in both languages—even about the shortcomings of his own party. He lost votes that way. He alienated support at every turn but he always seemed to gain more than he lost. He made no secret of the fact that a certain element in his own party didn't like him, thereby taking all value out of it. If the man had been caught early—very early—and tamed, he would have been an asset to any party. Now it would be hard to say how much of an asset he would be. He was as untameable as a tomcat. Josiah's party wanted him defeated almost more than they had ever wanted anything.

Among the many opportunities which had so far been vouchsafed Josiah by his faithful Yankee providence, this was the great one. Why he recognized it as such among other opportunities such as were always about, he couldn't have said. But he did. He picked Roberto Carrington immediately as his own eternal enemy. There was no logic in it. But there was never any logic in politics.

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As the election approached, busy as he was in his own ward, Josiah took time out to go forth into other wards and make friends with ward leaders and lesser precinct leaders and even greater district leaders. He managed, without any appearance of higher wisdom and sometimes by the sheer weight of his own silence, to show these harassed workers what they might be able to do.

"Be quiet about it—" That was what he counselled. "People are used to us—they know what to expect, so we don't have to talk."

"He's always talking—spouting about corruption."

"The voters aren't afraid of that word. They've heard it before."

"It depends what you mean by corruption—" It was a district leader speaking, one of the few who took any notice of what things meant. He was a member of the board of aldermen and there was an old story about him. Once a boy had leaned through an open window of the hall where the board was in session and shouted, "Mr. Alderman, your saloon's on fire!" He was the only man who had kept his seat.

"Whatever you mean by it, the voters aren't afraid of it," Josiah reiterated. "But they are afraid of something new. Make him out newer than he is. Tack something onto him that nobody has ever heard."

"Scandal?"

"God, no!"

The district leader puffed at his cigar. "What have you in mind?"

"Anarchy."

"Isn't that a pretty serious charge?"

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"Very serious—if you said it out loud—if you got it in the papers."

"I see. Just be quiet about it."

"Exactly." Josiah had other calls to pay. He rose. "Tell people he spends his vacations in Russia."

"Does he?"

"That's it! How should I know?"

"I see your point."

Efficiency was more important than any point either seen or unseen. Lack of it had disrupted more campaigns than any other one item except perhaps lack of money. The Democrats had plenty of money. So did the Republicans. But this man didn't. He never did. He spent every cent he could scrape on causes he thought were worthy, and his party, feeling doomed anyway, were not inclined to dig too deep into their pockets to make up the deficit. There was always a heavy deficit somehow. Landlords who had rented office space became suddenly greedy for their rent. Printers wanted cash on the line. And yet the fight never lagged. And Josiah was right up in the front line of battle, never making the mistake of accepting victory prematurely. Having been a Republican himself, he knew what they were thinking and what their methods were—though not always the thinking and the methods of this recalcitrant candidate with whom they had pooled their fortunes. He knew what they wouldn't be apt to do for him and therefore what he might or might not know enough to do on his own account.

What was anarchy exactly? Josiah looked the word up in the dictionary. It meant the absence of government, the state of society where there is no law or

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supreme power. And there was another word—anarchal. "We are in the habit of calling those bodies of men anarchal which are in a state of effervescence." Josiah was never in a state of effervescence. He never for a moment believed that Carrington advocated anarchy. At worst he was a communist—at best a socialist—and there were so many sorts of both of these. But a campaign was no time to dig into a man's inner convictions—merely to find out how he might act and stop him. Convictions sometimes showed the way. For one thing, Carrington was honest. It would be foolish to try to prove him anything else. He was honest not only in the ways it was comfortable for Josiah to be honest in, but militantly, brazenly honest. He made a fetish of it like a trademark. He appealed to the mob, who thought themselves like him when of course they weren't.

But you couldn't dismiss him as a mere rabble-rouser. You couldn't dismiss him as anything. There were a great many men who would sleep easier in their beds if they had thought you could. Even Josiah. Though Carrington had nothing personally against Josiah—not now, he hadn't. He had never heard of him at all up to the time when Josiah had discovered him as an opponent worthy of his steel.

There was a political meeting which provided the occasion of the first face-to-face meeting between the two men. No one but Josiah ever knew whether this latter was pre-arranged or merely the most fortuitous of contacts. But no one who knew Josiah puzzled very long over the way of it, as he was not one who worked best on impulse.

As a ward leader, Josiah was known to one of the

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policemen detailed to escort the candidate to the car provided for him after the meeting was over. Therefore Josiah was let through the lines. The New Englander, having been a Republican, could go at his ease among them. He could be almost easier than he was in his own ward. His long stride took him to Carrington's side before anyone but the policeman had the slightest idea who he was.

"I enjoyed your speech. Very interesting, what you had to say about legalized exploitation."

Carrington was shorter than Josiah—shorter by several inches. Perhaps he hadn't got his growth yet, being so young. But in any case he had to look up to meet his eyes. "Glad you liked it. I didn't say the half of it!"

"Naturally you didn't." Josiah was so friendly, so disarming. "But it set me thinking. And at that, it's better than unlegalized—"

The candidate cut him off: "Why have either?"

"Well—" The Yankee drawl was suddenly plain—"Exploitation's a big word, but if most people weren't exploited some they'd hardly be able to make a living."

"I want to change all that!"

"So I presume. Maybe most people don't want you to change it."

"Say—who are you, anyway?"

"Madden's the name. Ward Three."

There were plenty of Ward Threes in the city. But to Carrington the inference was immediate. "Democrat?"

"That's right."

The two measured each other, the tall one and the short one. They were both ambitious men. They had their being in the same country, the same century and—

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loosely—the same profession. There, any resemblance between them ended. Carrington didn't trouble to hide his suspicion. Josiah was smiling. It was characteristically the former who broke the silence:

"I'd be glad to talk with you at some other time. I'm due now at a rally uptown. I have to speak there."

"You do a lot of speaking."

"Your man does some too—saying the same thing over and over."

"That's what we like about him. And the voters like it. As I just now said, people don't want things changed mostly. But I won't detain you. This is a free country and I guess you have a right to speak your piece."

Carrington was known to have a temper. Having it, he used it whenever the occasion warranted. He used it now, letting his anger rise quite visibly. "That's white of you!"

Josiah said nothing—merely shrugged and went on smiling. Carrington tried to pass him.

"I don't have to take any guff from any ward heeler—"

"Now, now—no hard feelings—"

"Oh, all right!" The anger subsided a little, but it was Josiah who put out his hand.

There was a flash of light and a camera clicked. The Republican candidate for Mayor in the act of shaking hands during the heat of the campaign with a man from the opposition. . . .

"Say—what's going on here?"

Josiah, who was not a ward heeler in any sense, had gone, striding past his policeman, losing himself in the crowd.

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The picture was used in the papers quite widely, and a good deal was made of it by both sides, the Republicans calling it a cheap Democratic device to discredit their candidate, the Democrats pointing out that Carrington wasn't even a loyal representative of his own party. Why the handshake? What nefarious deal had been put through? Deals were expected of the Democrats, so the question did them no damage. It might have been said of course that Josiah by this recorded gesture didn't represent his own party either. But Josiah's own election was not at issue. Who was he anyway? A man from Boston, name of Madden—fire insurance—smart guy. Not Boston? Well, somewhere from those parts. It didn't matter. What mattered was that he had outsmarted Carrington, and that took some doing as Carrington was pretty smart himself.

It was discovered, quite as if it needed to be—at least in the inner circles—that Josiah was a close friend of old man Vliet. Well—there was no reason why anyone should be surprised. Vliet was a good picker when it came to friends. He ought to be—at his age! What was the old man up to? Grooming this unknown Yankee to step into his shoes? Josiah Madden—he'd bear watching.

The incident of the handshake was the first of many, all different, all disarming. The next incident worthy of any mention was accomplished without benefit of the enemy's actual presence. The scene was an occasion of minor importance, a meeting held at a Republican district club and furnished with speakers who had no claim to fame. The man in the audience who made a

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disturbance seemed harmless enough at first, except that he was taller than average. He was a persistent sort of fellow. Warned to keep quiet, he ignored the warning.

The young man who had given it was one of a group—a sort of secret society—pledged to the Carrington banner. Membership in this was drawn from various sources—the law school where Carrington had gone, the shipping room where he had once worked in the days before he had made even a precarious living out of politics. But high or low, rich or poor, the members were united in the service of their leader. As election approached this service included being sure that no one was intimidated—no voter—no speaker. No intimidation on the wrong side, anyway. Some of these devoted followers were perhaps too eager and inclined to overstep. If anyone made a disturbance they didn't always know when to let it pass. On this particular occasion they made far too much of it, adding to the disturbance instead of quelling it. Other young men came to the support of their colleague. The trouble maker egged them on, dared them to throw him out, which they finally did with some slight damage on both sides. The boys should have had better sense. They should have guessed it was Josiah, and that he would make capital out of having been attacked.

Rough stuff, if you like, but Josiah was never above a trifle of roughness. The Republicans regarded it differently. "Silk stocking"—that was the opprobrious term applied to some of them, and silk stockings were notable for their lack of wearing qualities in a brawl. And this had developed into a small free-for-all with Josiah in the midst of it like the hero of a melodrama.

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It hadn't been very pretty. That for you—and that for *you*—and *that* for your old man! And then Josiah appearing in public with old Henry Vliet—Josiah conspicuously adorned with adhesive tape and looking rather more than commonly tight lipped and piratical. . . .

The Republicans swallowed the thing and had an attack of indigestion. It seemed as though this renegade from their ranks—this Yankee Madden—had a special aptitude for making their candidate and all his works affect them with a queasy sense. It was the Democrats who had a word for it—the word being that if you wanted anything done, from devilling the opposition to getting an old woman in a back street to keep her vocal cats indoors at night, Joe Madden was the man to do it! Just tell him, that was all. Leave the details to him. Roberto Carrington was defeated and would doubtless have been defeated anyway—that had to be admitted. But the Democratic majority was exceptionally large, and Josiah got some of the credit.

It was absurd that such a man should continue in the comparative humbleness accruing to a mere ward leadership! Something must be done. Josiah, as a man of standing, wanted nothing from the Party of a material nature. On the surface this was very clear—down deep it might be a little different. What he wanted was eventual. He was after bigger game than any which could now be raised up for him. Nothing was said on this, either by Josiah or by anyone else, but it was understood. The district chief whose place Josiah finally took needed to be let out anyway.

Josiah knew a good deal about the fire laws. Naturally he would, fire insurance being his business. And it was

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convenient to have an expert around—one who was at large and not actually in the Department. When any question arose Josiah could be called in unofficially and his opinion regarded. There were getting to be far too many self-appointed champions of good government, and these were getting far too zealous about building laws and violations. Yes, it didn't do the Party any damage to have someone right up in the front ranks whose own business was all on the side of fire protection. So many separate devices seemed to be joined for Josiah's benefit.

The death of Henry Vliet was hardly one of these, but it had to come sooner or later. People didn't live forever. Josiah told himself this and tried vainly to shake off the loneliness which assailed him. He had formed in the city no other real friendships. His loneliness was strong upon him at Vliet's funeral, where he had the honor of being one of the pall bearers. Not all district leaders were pall bearers at the Vliet funeral. It was a much more exclusive convergence than that, counting among its numbers men in the very inner councils of the Party organization. No, it was not at all an ordinary crowd in the midst of which Josiah was lonely—lonely and inarticulate. It was one of Josiah's most valuable assets that he was inclined to be afraid of speech—even his own. These men, whom he was aware were quietly studying him, could put their own thoughts into his silent mouth.

He missed Vliet. He went to see the old lady, Vliet's daughter, whenever he could spare the time—which

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wasn't too often, what with politics and the insurance business. He wasn't making as much money out of insurance as he had before. But this was all right, because he'd saved his good railroad stock. This was as good today, fully, as it had been on the day Salem Anders had given it to him as a reward of virtue. He took a gamble and sold it. It was a gamble, really, on his own political future—much better than accepting some minor city job at a salary. He was playing for big stakes, and they were not stakes wholly composed of money. There was plenty of money about, if you just wanted that and nothing else.

People were gambling right and left, and winning. They were gambling on borrowed cash. They were buying stocks on margin. This made Josiah a little sick, even to think of. Besides, there was a general optimism regarding prosperity in which he took little interest, being so occupied with his own affairs. After all, it was a Republican prosperity, or so said the Republicans, and had already gone far enough—so said the Democrats. Too far. The crash came, the stock market crash, and Josiah realized he had played in luck again in selling his railroad stock when he had.

Yes, he admitted to a few men he knew, he'd sold a little stock when it was high. How had he been sure it wouldn't go higher? He hadn't been sure, but held his silence and gained a reputation for financial wisdom. Such wisdom was all the more admired as he was known to be an extremely busy man who couldn't be bothered with the vagaries of ticker tape.

He hoped his friend Miss Vliet hadn't been too much affected by the crash. Her father had left her quite a

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comfortable fortune in sound securities. But no securities were sound any more. No, she hadn't been affected—not unduly. She had always been thrifty with money and she still had more of it than she needed. She had moved from the red brick house in the bad neighborhood to a modern apartment in a nice street. She lived alone, her only companion being a pet canary named Ambrose. She didn't have to live alone as there were plenty of nieces and nephews to whom she might have attached herself, but she had an independence of spirit which forbade this.

Josiah was getting around outside his own district, seeing what he could see, and he didn't like everything he saw—not by any means. The unemployment situation was getting pretty bad, and it struck him that the city government was losing an opportunity to do something constructive. The Republican president kept insisting that everything was normal. There were several minor upturns, but everything was not normal. Perhaps the federal power of the Republicans was on the wane. Perhaps Josiah had been even luckier than had been at first apparent, to have cast his fortunes as he had, though this was a wholly personal angle. In the opinion of the great mass—an opinion always backed by votes in the next election—the existing government was always to blame if everyone wasn't prosperous. And the country wasn't prosperous, and nothing any Republican could say would make it so—not even saying that nobody was starving. Starving people were not usually known to the Republicans.

Such men as Josiah were insulated against starvation by their luck and their abilities, but there were plenty

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of Democrats starving in the big cities and the industrial towns and the farms—even some who weren't Democrats. It was a God-given chance for the Democratic Party to put to the proof what they had always claimed—the Democratic Party was the people's party and would look out for its own. Reform—basic reform—was one thing. Charity, temporary though on a scale, was another. Instead of taking immediate advantage of their great chance, the Democrats in the city were preoccupied with an investigation of conditions in the magistrates' courts, which the governor—a Democrat himself, oddly enough—had wished upon them. These conditions, it became apparent, were a trifle raw.

This was the way it began, and then there was a joint legislative commission appointed to look into things generally—graft mostly. Naturally there was graft. There wasn't any reason for either side to get so hot under the collar! But despite all this, there was a smashing Democratic victory up-state, and in the various Congressional elections also. It wasn't only in the state and in the city, but in other places, too—places usually Republican. This Republican president would have a definitely hostile Congress with which to finish his somewhat ill-fated term of office. Not that national politics ever concerned Josiah very greatly. But you couldn't ignore them—even a district leader couldn't ignore them.

There were upward of thirty districts in the city, and every district had a co-leader who was a woman. These women didn't count much, doing pretty well as they were told, but they were useful in bringing in the women's vote. Sometimes they talked too much, like

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the woman who made a speech at a very high-hat meeting, in which she told her listeners exactly how everything was worked. This gave the newspapers, who knew these things anyway, a legitimate chance to publish certain facts which looked worse than they were. It was rather unfortunate, just at the start of this second investigation, which proved incidentally a little too much for the present mayor, who resigned in the middle of it and hustled himself off to Europe. Josiah thought he ought to have stood his ground. He had never thought too highly of him, though he had kept his opinion to himself and had worked so triumphantly for his election. Not being a lawyer, Josiah was able to keep out of the whole thing.

There were a lot of resignations. Some men had been in city politics too long. Never had there been more chance for a new man—a man of standing—of spotless reputation—a man on whom nobody had anything because there was nothing to be had.

7.

JOSIAH had the feel of power all the time now and it worked through to his inner being. It wasn't just in flashes, not just at high moments, like the time he'd finished off the machine gun nest of Heinies. He was something more than a man of standing as such might be judged by the uncritical. He was a man of substance and the substance was of fair quality. He'd done well. Not that he was satisfied with what he had done or unduly smug about it, but his view of the future was clear and it was a pleasant view. It was a fine unclouded sky and a rolling land and a blue sea and the wind tingled his scalp.

He took time out occasionally from his many concentrations to wonder how the people at home were faring. It was odd how you could live in a place for more than thirty years and then cut yourself off from it altogether! He heard from Judge Anders sometimes and he heard from his mother, though she was no letter writer. He sent her money regularly, which she scrupulously acknowledged. His two sisters, Lillian and Ruth, had never meant much to him and now they meant less. Their simple news was sometimes seized upon by Mrs. Madden as something to write about. The hardware store owned by Ruth's husband wasn't doing well. Lillian had a new baby. Mrs. Madden had been out to Lillian's for Sunday

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dinner. Ruth's eldest boy had fallen out of an apple tree and broken his arm.

The dentist, Cohen, seemed to have dropped away as completely as if the earth had swallowed him. He might have moved to another town. He might have died. As for Max Keg, the Judge mentioned him occasionally, so he must be still driving the Judge's fine car and living over the Judge's garage. Even Josiah's fellow members of the City Council had become names largely disattached. And there was no one else. Amos, no more currently identified with the place of their birth than Josiah was himself, was still teaching at the same school and was engaged to be married to the daughter of one of the other professors there. The Maddens were not a close-knit family. His mother was the only one of them Josiah felt towards as families were expected to feel. He asked her to come for a visit. She promised to do this at some time but the time was never definitely agreed upon. This was too bad, because his mother would enjoy the city. There were museums to visit, and shops. Josiah even had a companion all picked out for her. She and Miss Vliet would have much in common. Miss Vliet reminded Josiah of his mother in so many ways, though she was older and in a sense more sophisticated.

He got to wondering what Miss Vliet would think of Flo. They were as different as two women could be, but they could doubtless endure each other for an evening. There was very little social life at the Madden apartment—better none at all than the wrong kind. Flo was almost as particular about this as Josiah was. Flo had a few friends that she'd made here and there, and there were one or two couples with whom they exchanged

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occasional dinners. Having Miss Vliet to dinner was rather out of their line, but it worked out unexpectedly well.

Josiah, knowing she was due, came home a little early. As he put his key in the door he heard voices—Flo's and a man's whose tones he didn't immediately recognize. He had no idea who it could be, as few men came to the house and never to see Flo alone—that was one thing. Entering the parlor, he found there his brother Amos. Amos hadn't changed much. He was the same tall young man, who would have looked even taller if both his occupation and his heredity hadn't given him a tendency to stoop. He had a clean-cut profile and fine eyes, which last were not too flattered by steel-rimmed glasses. His manner had changed a little. It had been in the past wholly dictatorial. Now there was a veneer over this of man-to-man heartiness, born doubtless of being a teacher in a boy's school. No boy must ever feel shy or let down in his presence.

"Well, Josiah—well, well—"

"Well, Amos—"

"You're looking fit. City life evidently suits you."

"It suits me all right—"

"I regard it as wholly undesirable, but—"

Flo got in her word. "Your brother sent us a telegram but it didn't get here till after he did. I told him we were having company to dinner but would be delighted to have him stay."

"I don't know why not," Josiah said. In fact it seemed to Josiah rather perfect—Amos and Miss Vliet.

"I don't want to inconvenience you," Amos protested a bit half-heartedly.

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"Not in the least! It's an old lady, the daughter of Henry Vliet."

Amos had obviously never heard of Henry Vliet. "I had planned to suggest that you might be able to put me up for the night—save my going to a hotel—"

"Why surely, if you don't mind sleeping on the sofa. We'll fix you up somehow. People in the city don't usually have spare rooms."

The sofa—rather an ornate object—the pride of the furniture store back home, which was also the establishment of the local undertaker, was obviously too short for the lank Madden build in any attitude of sleep. They all looked at it.

"Our furniture is so out of date," Flo said. "We're thinking of getting some modern pieces. Those new simple lines and the blond wood—why, some of those new couches run seven feet or better! It's too bad—but one does put things off so."

It was the first Josiah had heard about getting new furniture. He remembered when Flo had been more than pleased with what they now had. That was what the city did for women—gave them ideas.

"I'll manage," said Amos. "It's only for one night. Why I've slept on the ground many a time—camping trips, you know—I took a group of boys to the Maine woods last summer—"

"I suppose that was part of your job," said Josiah.

"Yes, but it was a pleasure as well as a duty. By the way, that's a fine boy of yours—and I know boys."

"Yes, everyone's crazy about Junior," Flo put in.

"We think he's pretty superior—" This from Josiah.

Amos smiled. "I think you have a right to that opinion."

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A true Madden—or Bently, perhaps I should say. And yet I detect in him something more—a winning quality, a sunniness of disposition, something for which I fear the Bentlys or the Maddens have never been exactly noted.”

“I guess there’s something of his mother in him—”

“There must be—of course.”

“Where is he?” Josiah asked. “It isn’t quite his bedtime yet, is it?”

“I had Hannah give him his supper a little early,” Flo explained. “And now he’s changing his things. When Miss Vliet comes I thought it would be nice for her to see him.”

“By all means—”

Flo rose—“If you two’ll excuse me for a moment, I have a few things to attend to—just check up on Hannah a little and what she’s doing about dinner. Besides, you’ll likely have a lot of things to talk about.”

They didn’t—not very much—not before Miss Vliet arrived. Amos and Miss Vliet got on famously, as Josiah had been sure they would, and Josiah Junior’s carefully organized and brief appearance did everyone credit.

“Just a simple home evening,” Flo explained it to her guest. “What’s the French term? *En famille*?” Flo was taking French lessons for some obscure purpose.

It was all terrifically domestic and non-political, and somehow in his own estimation a step up for Josiah. Though Miss Vliet, or Miss Vliet’s opinion, could be of no practical value since her father had died. But there were times—and this was one of them—when it wasn’t so much anything which actually happened or could happen that mattered to Josiah as it was what

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went on inside himself. If the old lady's evening had been a failure from any cause whatever the failure would have affected Josiah rather more adversely than, by reason, it should. And he was glad too to put his best foot forward before his brother. He could tell that Amos was a little surprised, not so much at his obvious prosperity as at his no less obvious respectability.

After Miss Vliet left and Josiah came back from having put her into a taxi, a better plan for Amos's night was evolved. It was Flo's idea. "There's a folding cot in Junior's room," she said. "I could sleep there and your brother could go in with you, Joe—"

"Perhaps that would be best—"

"We've slept together before—"

Josiah remembered himself and Amos in the big double bed at his mother's. That had been a long time ago. It would have been pleasant now to have turned back the clock to it. Amos would not have been such a stranger. Josiah could have taken him into his confidence, told him all his hopes—and his fears too, if he could have thought of any. But as things were, all this would have made too much explaining. The brothers had nothing in common really except their ancestry. They talked a little. Josiah asked Amos what he had come to the city for.

"I wanted to get rid of a medal."

"What medal?"

"A medal I received for a piece I wrote about the development of the English language in the 18th Century. I was working for my doctorate—my Ph.D.—and I wrote this piece and it was entered in a contest.
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"That was quite an honor, wasn't it?"

"Quite. I've had the thing for several years and didn't know exactly what to do about it."

"What should you do about it?"

"Well, it was solid gold."

"Oh, you came here to sell it! How much was it worth?"

"It assayed at \$173.85. You see, I didn't want to dispose of it too near school. People would talk. In fact, my fiancée didn't want me to part with it at all, but women don't understand such matters. You got a medal once too, didn't you?"

"Yes, but mine wasn't gold. I've still got it somewhere. It was damned useful to me for a while."

"I can see how it might have been. That was when you were mixed up in politics back home. Didn't you run for mayor there?"

"That's right. I didn't get elected."

"Your wife says you're out of politics now."

"Did she?"

Josiah looked at Amos lying in the big bed beside him. Then he reached over and put out the lamp. The lamp was an intricate device with a ruffled shade, very different from the candle on a saucer which had been for the Madden brothers a one time source of bedside illumination.

"Good night, Amos."

"Good night, Josiah."

"Breakfast's at eighty-thirty."

"I'll be out of here before that. I have a train to catch. But I'll see you before I go."

"I'll be up. I've got a full day ahead."

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This was the last word spoken before sleep engulfed the two of

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club. In fact he rarely came there. He kept out of sight, covering his tracks as carefully as an Indian scout, and was referred to only in the inner circles—and then not by name but merely as the “Big Fellow.” Tom Duffy, the duly elected and appointed chief of the Organization, carried out his orders and never let these be tangled by the powers apparently vested in himself. There had to be someone titularly at the front, someone who wasn’t too clever.

The Organization had had enough of cleverness. The last man chosen for its chief had got it into a good deal of trouble by his being on extremely close terms with the Board of Standards and Appeals—a board which by the vote of its members could annul building ordinances in any way it pleased. He had been a partner in a law firm whose clients received remarkably favorable consideration in such matters. The fees paid were commensurate with the consideration. This might have been all right, but the lawyer-politician had carried it too far. It was found that legal delicacies were almost as dangerous as the old strong-arm methods. The present incumbent was merely a reasonably competent politician and an excellent office manager. Legal delicacies were beyond him. He was somewhat the type of man to be found in the credit office of a department store. He doubtless knew all the ropes and how to knot them and all the wires and how to pull them. He would have access too to any information it might be necessary to have on tap. It would have been more dramatic for Josiah to have been sent for by one of the old time bosses who had everything under their own thumbs. Tom Duffy was known to be a figure-head but he was important locally, and his summons to

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Josiah—suggested from on high as it must have been—was the focal point to which all the paths in Josiah's career had gradually been converging.

When Josiah entered, Duffy set down some papers and rose.

"How are you, Madden? Glad to see you. Have a seat."

"Thanks, Mr. Duffy."

Josiah waited. No use making small talk. That wasn't done very much among the people with whom he was now associated. Duffy took his time about speaking again. He looked tired, Josiah noticed, and it wasn't any momentary fatigue. He wasn't a particularly impressive figure and his caller felt quite his equal, if not a little his superior. This, conceal it as he might, colored Josiah's attitude, and gave him a certain advantage it was useful to possess. The man seemed slightly bewildered, though the gray eyes back of the polished eye glasses were keen enough. He certainly had a right to his bewilderment. A lot of things which had been found to be wrong with the Organization had been so before he had entered upon his present responsibilities. And yet it was he who now held the bag. Perhaps such holding was his chief duty and he knew it, even though he wasn't very clever. It was just that what was now wanted of him—a clean bill of health—was something he couldn't quite deliver. The fact that he was respectable and passably honest wasn't sufficient, or that he had a certain native shrewdness and knew the ropes and had access to considerable private information. Many men could achieve the unlikely—few the impossible. Josiah was familiar with his record. He had held elective office and always made

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a living strictly out of politics, unless you took his connection with a small real estate firm at its face value. He would have to make a living, even here in this present office which carried no visible salary. He had considerable minor patronage in his gift.

At last he spoke: "You've done some good work for us, Madden. We've been watching you."

Josiah wasn't sure whether it was the editorial and kingly "we" which had been used, or merely an admission made of the division of power. He answered the first of the two brief and hardly startling statements: "I'm glad you think so."

"We always try to show our appreciation. Sometimes, with a man like yourself that's a little hard. It's easy to give most men jobs, but in your case—"

"Yes, I know."

"Exactly. Some men like to be put on the ticket. They play their cards that way. And others don't."

"Like myself?"

"Yes, like yourself."

"I don't make a good candidate for elective office. It cramps my style somehow."

"You oughtn't to feel it too hard," said Duffy, "because you were defeated for mayor in your home town. Things operated against you there which wouldn't operate here."

Josiah took this head-on. "It isn't so much that. But I've always done my best work behind the lines."

"That's what we said." This wasn't the editorial or kingly "we". Duffy went on—"There've been some rather unfortunate developments lately and some of our

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best people have resigned. It leaves openings which wouldn't ordinarily exist."

"So I've heard," said Josiah.

"Yes, of course you have. Openings, I mean, which have to be filled."

"There must be plenty of deserving Democrats—"

"Not so many—not now—times have changed. They've changed a good deal. In Washington we seem to be doing better. Here in the city the voters have been told a lot of things there wasn't any need for them to know. The fact is, they've been given too much to worry about."

"It's a great mistake," Josiah said, "to worry the voters." This was not sarcasm nor meant as such, and no smile showed in either face.

"When a man has proved his value as you have," Duffy went on, "we try to put him in something where his interests won't be too much divided."

"In other words, you can use his full time."

"Yes. The fact that you're new at the game—not really new, but you come from out-of-town, which fact can easily be verified—this makes you extremely eligible as things are now, when ordinarily it wouldn't. No use concealing from you that a couple of years ago—maybe longer—we wouldn't have been very much interested in any man who hadn't grown up right in his own precinct and who hadn't always been a Democrat. But, as I said, times have changed. People at large don't know very much about you. While that wouldn't once have been so good, now it is. In fact I was talking over conditions generally with someone whose opinion—whose judgment—" Duffy hesitated. Naturally, he wouldn't

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come right out and admit that the Big Fellow was responsible for Josiah's summons.

Why not get on with things? "Exactly what have you in view?"

"That would depend very considerably on your own response."

"You mean from a financial angle?" No one knew better than Josiah did that a great many jobs could not be had unless the man under consideration was willing to guarantee a handsome sum. In the case of an elective office the money would be needed for campaign expenses. For those not elective it could be handled in other ways. Sometimes it was perfectly legitimate. It could always be made to seem so—or almost always. Josiah wasn't buying. He didn't think he would have to, but he might as well get it clear. It was clear:

"Definitely no."

So that was all right.

"You mean my response in other ways?"

"Yes. You said just now that you preferred to work behind the lines, and—as I told you—we'd figured it might be that way. But still, it's a pity to pass up such an opportunity. It's a peculiar situation which might never arise again—never."

Josiah was becoming a little impatient with the peculiarity of the situation. But you had to let the man talk. After all, at least the ghosts of all the big bosses were on his side.

"Just to finish out the term," he went on—"just a year to run. You're one of the men being mentioned for the position and if you made good you could practically

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write your own ticket. If you didn't, no great harm done."

Josiah looked at him. "Are you talking about the mayoralty election which is coming up in the fall?"

"That's it. The recent resignation leaves a year to run."

"You mean they're thinking of putting my name in the primaries to run for mayor of this city?"

"That's it. Only to finish out the term."

Josiah felt as though he were holding onto his hat, but his habit of silence had never been so helpful. For all of fifteen seconds he didn't speak at all. It was the other man who waited. "I'm afraid it wouldn't work," Josiah said at last.

"I won't argue with you," Duffy answered him. "We'll simply have to figure on something more congenial. We took into consideration the fact that you might refuse. There are plenty of other openings."

"You mean you have something else in view for me besides that?"

"Yes. After all, for every man who's elected to office there are a dozen who aren't. I don't mean they're defeated. Sometimes they're appointed—"

"Hired," put in Josiah.

"All right—hired. And sometimes, like myself, they're given a position which carries no salary whatever. That's the catch in it. Some people don't take enough advantage of their opportunities—" he made a quick bow in Josiah's direction—"and some people take too much. In work of this sort you have to be careful. I believe you are. I need help here. I need it the worst way!"

"You do look a little peaked," said Josiah. Of course

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he hadn't meant he needed help because he was peaked. He had meant he needed help for pulling his chestnuts—or rather the Organization chestnuts—out of the fire. They had been roasted a little brown and their rescue needed a longer arm than he had been found to possess.

"I'd need a man who was unknown and smart and—more than anything else—steady."

"And careful?" Josiah smiled a little for the first time.

"Damned careful!" It was really no more than a whisper but none the less emphatic for this.

"What's the matter with one of your pals?"

"Which one?"

"I wouldn't know which. I mean any one of the inner council who helps you run things."

Tom Duffy was admittedly a careful man. All his mental processes were long hardened in the mold in which his profession had placed him. He never did anything he didn't do deliberately or said anything otherwise. But now for a moment, truth, bitterness and rebellion flared through him. "I'll tell you what's the matter with the whole damned lot of them! They don't trust each other. There isn't one that any of the rest would dare put up for such a job."

"Why would they trust me?" Josiah asked.

"Because they don't know you, I guess it must be—and maybe they underestimate you just a little. Besides, you'd be on probation for quite a while. They'd be watching you like hawks as they could hardly watch a friend." The flame of absolute frankness sputtered and died. You could see its end in the man's face.

"Thanks for tipping me off," Josiah replied.

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"It would be a job," Duffy went on, "which would take most of your time but not all—not at first anyway. Your first-hand knowledge of the liquor business would come in useful. And factories. And insurance, of course. And you have good connections. The way the Republicans in Washington are being pushed around they wouldn't mind so much having a good Democrat who'd been with them in the past and could put in a word for them in a city like this. While it's too bad you wouldn't let us consider you further as regards the mayoralty, it may work out all for the best. We'll find some one. We'll all be over him and it's only for a year." Josiah's new employer rose. He put out a hand which Josiah took. "And now you better go back to your office and say nothing about it!"

Naturally Josiah would say nothing. He wasn't like Roberto Carrington. He would control himself. All the muscles of his face, including his tongue, could stiffen over any inner tumult. What a joke on Flo! Too bad he couldn't tell her. She had wanted so much to be the mayor's wife, and here he'd gone and spoiled her chance at it. It was an off chance, to be sure. He might not get the nomination. He might, finally, not win the election. At least this was the way Josiah figured the thing and one of the reasons he'd turned it down. What he'd been offered in its stead was better, though he hadn't known it would be when he'd made his quick decision.

In Washington the Republicans went out and the Democrats went in. The Democrats took charge of the depression. Josiah had always felt that they'd been miss-

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ing their opportunity. Finally they were getting somewhere—the Democrats and Josiah. Especially Josiah. His previous life had been little more than a training period for the place he had finally attained.

He kept his connection with the fire insurance company, and on a gratifying profitable basis too. This was important, his political position carrying no salary. But as an agent for his company he was able to handle a nice slice of municipal and state business. He had done this in a small way before but now it really amounted to something. It produced a good livable income, and quite as legitimately as most. Besides, he was in the way of hearing things—tips on the market for instance. The market wasn't much good any more, but stocks still went up and down, and some people knew about it in advance. He never risked more than a few hundred dollars. Naturally, he was careful. His reputation for such care being one of the main reasons for his elevation to a height decidedly fabulous, he had to be even more careful than was his habit. The Organization had been gravely ill and had survived. It would go on surviving largely through the ministrations of such men as Josiah on whom there was nothing to be had.

A careful man was one who did nothing to bring either himself or his party into disrepute. The reformers were getting much too vocal and the public much too inclined to listen to them and—without any definite knowledge—to blame the Party, and the Organization, for everything. Josiah could be trusted not to get into trouble himself or to bring trouble closer than it already was to the handful of men who were biding their time while reform ran its course. One of these men was a

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district leader with a private fortune. That was what he was outwardly—what he was officially. He was the man otherwise known as the Big Fellow, the word "Boss" having fallen somewhat into disrepute.

He functioned obscurely behind Tom Duffy and behind Josiah. The two made a shield for him, very fancy window dressing which anyone could look at. The whisper was that some day he hoped to get complete control of the entire city government. When that day came there wouldn't be any need of shields. Meanwhile, he paid his income tax regularly—maybe not quite as much as he ought to have paid, but still plenty, and—being a good Catholic—he gave a great deal of money to the Church. In fact he was always helping the poor in ways for which Josiah could see no real necessity. It wasn't only the poor whose friend he was. He cultivated friendships in Washington, which gave him a good deal of federal patronage. He was smooth. He was so smooth he was plushy and he was as crooked as a dog's hind leg.

The men in Washington didn't know what he was really like—Josiah gave them credit there. How could they have known, when Josiah himself, who was closer to such information, had found out only bit by bit? There were rackets in the city of varying sorts. There always had been and there always would be. You couldn't stop all crime and graft at one fell swoop. The less practical among the reformers didn't realize the difficulties. But these crooks were all over the country in organized groups, and they couldn't have lasted for five minutes on any such scale were it not for certain men in power who gave them protection, who could turn out magistrates and put them in, breathe important nothings

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into the attentive ears of police chiefs, arrange that prosecutors should not always be too exigent in the pursuit of their duties.

Josiah's work did not lie along such lines, and it was distinctly no part of it that he should fraternize with the lower orders. But the Big Fellow didn't do this either save in rare and whispered instances. He didn't know such people but he knew plenty of lawyers, and the lawyers knew them. In fact he had a whole stable of lawyers working in his interests. Ever so often one of them got disbarred. It was easier to get a lawyer disbarred than to dismiss him. Then people were not apt to believe anything he might say. Disbarment was something which could never happen to Josiah. He wasn't a lawyer. Nothing could happen to Josiah as long as he kept his mouth shut and did his routine job efficiently. He might live for a hundred years quite uneventfully, as Henry Vliet had lived.

Vliet had been window dressing too. They ought to form a club. Vliet had been the charter member. And shrewd. And with a certain small crookedness of the sort which Josiah understood, having grown up in an atmosphere of the minor stench. Josiah's earlier contacts with the underworld had all been minor, though he hadn't regarded them so at the time. Why, compared to the present set-up his connection with Tony Genarro had been open and aboveboard! And even so, it had been one he had been relieved to sever. Genarro was dead, killed by the druggist Perley. Perley ought never to have gone into the business of selling liquor, he being the sort of man who liked to have everything legal. In Josiah's inner self crookedness had its place, but he liked

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to keep it there, small and easy to handle. He was a little afraid of the largeness of the Big Fellow's transactions. And the man functioned so obscurely. No one would ever have guessed the connections he had or that his comfortable private fortune had its source, at least in part, in the percentages paid him by criminals.

As for Josiah, he played along with Tom Duffy, never treading on Duffy's toes, or showing him by any act or word that he was more and more edging over into his authority and always preserving the delicate balance of compromise. He looked like such an uncompromising man. But it was trading, really—not compromise—and the commodity traded in was power. Josiah was so practical. He never attempted the impossible or reached into matters beyond his own jurisdiction. He had no wish to grow too big for his own breeches, or to interfere without being sure of having the strength to make the interference hold. Men in power often did that, developing in themselves an exaggerated sense of their own value. Josiah was an answer to prayer. Tom Duffy had somehow outgrown his usefulness. He seemed so eternally tired. And yet he couldn't be removed just at the moment, which was for the Organization rather a ticklish moment. There were times when you didn't stir the kettle for fear of what might be found at the bottom of it.

But it soon got to be known that if you wanted something done you went, not to the big room on the third floor, but to the smaller one, also on the third floor, but around the bend in the corridor. This room wasn't nearly so impressive but the man behind the desk there was impressive enough. He might refuse to grant your favor, but if he didn't, your worries were over. He was never

too greedy nor drove what seemed too hard a bargain. He had after all a considerable pride in his newly acquired city and he didn't want the place to fall too utterly into disrepute. Josiah possessed also a strong sense of personal responsibility, though people who didn't know him in his more intimate relationships would hardly have been aware of this. Some men, putting themselves forth as defenders of city democracy, protested too much. Josiah nursed his protests. And he had a head for detail.

Of course the favor asked of him by Cyrus Enderby involved a type of detail rather smaller than the type he himself was in the habit of handling. He told Nellie Finch to take care of it, Finch being a highly trusted employee who took care of a great many matters with which neither Josiah nor Tom Duffy—and certainly not the Big Fellow—could be annoyed.

8.

JOSIAH granted the favor at once. Though he was rather surprised at Enderby's asking it. The man was a Republican and inclined towards reform. He knew Roberto Carrington. Everyone to their taste. Carrington had gone back to the law and was named as a possibility for district attorney. Enderby was exactly the kind of man whom Carrington would cultivate—moneyed, influential. The Organization could use a little of his influence, though they would naturally be hesitant about the money—not that they would be offered it. Enderby was a big man in city traction. What he didn't know about subways could be written on a penny. You had to reckon with him a little. His present request was odd. He wanted Josiah to give his daughter a job. Enderby would hardly have suggested such a thing if there'd been any funny business involved—if the girl would try to find out anything untowards about the Organization. It wasn't his way of doing things. Besides, what was there to know that wasn't known in the wrong quarters already?

"She has a fool idea she wants to learn about politics. I guess working for you will cure her!"

Men such as Cyrus Enderby, intrenched as they were behind the bulwark of means and position, were so damnably sure of themselves. They could insult you so

casually and be sure you would never take it amiss. Josiah was accustomed to such men by now. He'd been in the way of meeting all kinds of prominent people—from the governor of the state to Washington senators and men who stood quite as high as his present visitor stood in financial circles. He'd even met again—and under happier circumstances than before—his old enemy, Carrington, and the hatchet was nicely buried between them, even though in shallow ground. A hatchet was an awkward tool to be always carrying about. So Enderby's slur didn't bother him as it might once have done. The traction magnate's language was one of the many he was getting to understand, just as his own was one of the many that Enderby spoke quite fluently.

"Can't the Republicans use her?" Josiah asked. "I should think that would be more in your line."

"I'm not a typical Republican! Besides, if I got her a job with them it would be thought I'd used my influence. Let her find out how the other half lives."

"Isn't it a good deal like tossing her into a den of lions?"

"With you, Madden? Now come—"

Not drinking and not smoking, Josiah had gained a reputation for puritanism. And there were no scandals about him connected with women. It was known he had an ideal family life—a wife and boy to whom he was devoted. For the most part, he kept his wife out of the public eye. When she did appear on any state occasion she was perfectly presentable. She was rather quiet, a little on the plump side, and beautifully dressed. Very pleasant she was—very pleasant indeed—as inoffensive as a creature of wax in a shop window. There was

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nothing about Mrs. Madden to which anyone could take exception.

Josiah smiled. "Oh I fancy Miss Enderby'll be safe—"

Her father didn't seem to doubt it. "As safe as she would be in a church—"

She was probably the kind of girl who would be safe anywhere, Josiah thought passingly. He'd seen plenty of them who were college graduates—as she was—and who wanted to learn about politics. They had a mission in life, or so they thought, quite other than that for which they had been brought into the world. And they weren't like Nellie Finch, either. Finch knew what was expected of her, having learned it the hard way, and she wasn't a rich man's daughter. She'd never see forty again and she'd never see her job again if she fell down on it. She needed her job in order to eat.

"You tell your daughter," said Josiah, "that she'll have to make herself useful in any way she can. I suppose she knows what a typewriter looks like?" He wasn't being too cordial about it, purposely. It looked better that way. "I'll tell Miss Finch to send for her."

"I don't think you'll regret it."

"I'm sure I won't." He could say this honestly because the hiring of a new clerk was hardly a matter important enough to take Josiah's regret. There were other matters far more vital between him and Enderby.

The Boss had once listed to Josiah his useful knowledge—the liquor business, factories, insurance, Republican connections. He had left one item of such knowledge quite unlisted. The omission might have been intentional. Josiah's early involvement in the matter of a local traction problem was possibly not to be stressed.

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But what he had learned from it was as useful as any of the above. He could talk with Enderby as he couldn't have talked otherwise. The first experience was on a small scale. This wasn't. It was as dangerous as T.N.T.

The present controversy concerned one of the city subway lines. For various reasons, not all of them quite as they were made public, the company had been placed in the hands of a receiver and was now being operated in that manner. There were two receivers appointed—Cyrus Enderby and a lawyer. Enderby had been at one time an official of the company and was therefore familiar with the routine administration. In fact it might have been thought that he was a little too familiar.

The company had been in a bad way for a long time, and now there were auditors on the books checking everything from depreciation to insurance—from legitimate profits to overstatement of earnings. You couldn't blame the company too much for having put the best face on the situation and justifying the payment of unearned dividends where such payment would do the most good. That was how such things were handled. You extended the hand of friendship here and there, you got around the stockholders any way you could, these last being an assemblage usually inert. But Enderby might not see it like that now that he had things somewhat to himself, not even in the case of a corporation with which he personally had been at one time associated. He was an engineer as well as a financial man. In regard to subways he knew all the answers and he was apt to use his knowledge with a terrifying freedom. He was like a criminal

willing to turn state's evidence and willing—nay, eager—to testify strictly on the merits of the case. You never knew what he might turn up.

A subway was a public utility and a public utility was subject to the authority of legislatures and legislatures were subject to the authority of political parties. That was the catch in it—for Josiah. That was why Josiah was so anxious to placate Cyrus Enderby. There was an old franchise. Josiah had had experience with franchises. And there were features connected with this one which it wouldn't be for the best to bring into the light of day just now. If the subway company hadn't been altogether blameless some people would say that the city government hadn't been blameless either. Both men, both Josiah and Enderby, were in a ticklish position—not so much Josiah personally as Josiah as a representative of his party. They could have been just a little afraid of each other if either man were inclined to deal in fear—their own fear, that is to say. But they weren't afraid even of the commissions and the committees that had gathered around the defunct company like buzzards around a dead horse. And they had no particular dread of the court rulings that held its fate.

"The mantle of the court protects the incompetent," Enderby said.

"Too much so, if you ask me," Josiah added.

"It also protects the people against unreasonable charges for services rendered." This from Enderby. He seemed to be quoting something.

Josiah shrugged. "What are unreasonable charges? When charges are too reasonable business doesn't pay."

"A railroad isn't regarded as a business. It's a utility."

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"There's no fun in the difference," Josiah put in. "It takes capital and invests it, and capital must show a profit."

"The law sets the rate of return."

"Sometimes the law makes me sick," said Josiah. It didn't really make him sick. He had always regretted the fact that he wasn't himself a lawyer. "I don't care what rate it sets," he went on, "if you can't find a sufficient number of passengers who'll pay fares. If people don't like your railroad they won't use it. And if they think your rate's too high they won't use it—not unless they have to—which in this case they don't. How are you going to fix a value on a thing like that? Too many angles. You've got to get at it from another side altogether."

The traction magnate flicked a heavy eyebrow. "You mean take it out of the hands of the law?" And then, when Josiah nodded—"I'm afraid you can't do that. Whether our tracks span a continent or a distance of fifteen miles, it means, automatically, segregation from other forms of business."

Josiah didn't follow this reasoning wholly, but he accepted it. Enderby knew his stuff. He knew exactly what took place when the trains ran along the tracks. He also knew doubtless how they could be of greatest benefit to the public. But segregation was a big word and meant nothing to Josiah in this connection. He waited.

"And segregation means regulation," Enderby finally added.

"Now we're getting somewhere," said Josiah. "Regulation can be carried much too far. You don't have to take it lying down—not if you don't want to."

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Enderby looked at him. "Do you think there's anything you might be able to do about that?"

"I might. We're both practical men, Mr. Enderby."

There was a pause during which Enderby failed to conceal from Josiah that he was faintly uncomfortable. What did he think Josiah was going to do? Ask him for a bribe? That wasn't in Josiah's mind even faintly.

"Yes?" Enderby prodded him.

Josiah had learned never to hurry, particularly when prodded. Segregation. . . . You segregated criminals or people with small pox or sometimes races, but how in hell did you segregate railroads and how did it mean regulation? However, that it did was a break. When he was ready he went on speaking:

"You're in a key position, Mr. Enderby. You probably know more about this particular matter than any man alive. It's not all in the records. Some of it's in your head. And nobody's going to check up on your head—not without your permission anyway. Your road played politics and politics played the road. But what's done is done. Well, perhaps politics are willing to forgive and forget and do what they can for you now—"

"By politics I take it you mean city politics in the narrower sense—"

"That's it. No use digging things up unnecessarily—cutting off your nose to spite your face."

"Yes, I can see how a sinister interpretation might be placed—particularly as regards the granting of that early franchise—"

"That and other matters," Josiah cut in.

"I begin to see what you mean."

Josiah credited Enderby with having seen this some

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time back, but if the older man wanted to pretend slowness it was all right. "Our party has influence. Not as much as it had at one time, perhaps, but plenty. The organization I represent is still in excellent working order. Don't let anyone kid you it isn't."

"It still has potentialities, I admit."

Josiah looked at him. "If it didn't have something more useable than potentialities, Enderby, you wouldn't be here now!"

Enderby returned the look. "There's something in what you say."

"The law and the legislatures—"

"Precisely."

Josiah had no idea what was meant by "precisely" in this connection. It wasn't "precisely" at all that the Organization could influence the interpretation the law could place on certain acts. Perhaps he didn't understand the Enderby phraseology as well as he thought he did. "I think it can be handled," he said at last.

"Would I have your personal assurance that you would see what you could do?"

"Assurances exchanged," said Josiah.

It wasn't like a bribe in any sense. Just favors granted for favors received—as always. As now. These present favors were not fraud—certainly not illegal fraud. They bore nothing for anyone to prove. In fact no sinister interpretation, as Enderby had put it, could possibly be attached to two men chatting together about this and that, though the office they sat in was somewhat isolated and had walls which could be trusted. Nothing to it. Always minimize the importance of any favor. Enderby might have talked, and now he wouldn't. Josiah had

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removed the charge of T.N.T. as neatly as a member of the police department's bomb squad might do the same. Or was it T.N.T.? Whatever it was, Josiah had removed it. He felt good. He was in the driver's seat. He did favors merely out of the kindness of his heart. What was that other one he had promised? Oh yes—Enderby's daughter. Giving her the job her father so oddly wished for her was a sort of premium Josiah could hand out like the free dish towel enclosed in the package of soap powder. It put the customer in a good mood.

The orders weren't coming in nearly so fast, which was largely due to Josiah. Word got about that there were a great many things which could safely be left to his judgment. The dead center of the road—that was Josiah's path—and not so dead either, but dignified. There had once been illiteracy working in a certain manner. This had been superseded by literacy working in a certain manner. Both had been caught. A third way was now in progress of which Josiah was an example. As a compromise it wasn't bad, functioning quietly and at the same time openly. For such functioning, even victory at the polls was not essential, merely patience and caution, merely waiting on the sidelines to step in again, never knowing what would be of value, or how or when.

The Party was a machine, and certain elements in this had become detached and—instead of being fastened securely by good nuts and bolts—had been found to be held together by a substance no more permanently adhesive than chewing gum. The former chiefs had overreached themselves, eating so much jam out of the jam closet. Breaking down the closet door with a pick-axe or

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opening it gently with a key that fitted, the result had been the same. What a man like the Big Fellow did was different. He was on his own, eating his jam in the most beautiful seclusion. The rest of them now could take just a little—gentlemen's portions, no more—no quantity any housekeeper would miss. The Organization had become almost like a great bank, watching the conduct of its employees so closely that the rules for conduct approached a curtailment of civil liberties! But this was all right. It wasn't safe to give to anyone the power knowledge of any real misfeasance would engender.

Josiah retained his district leadership and had also been elected to the state central committee. He was on various deliberative bodies, not taking any strikingly active part in the deliberations or saying much, unless there was an urgent reason for speech—which there usually wasn't. Sometimes he emerged from his silence. There was the case of the man who was up for appointment as Superintendent of Public Buildings, who in Josiah's opinion had no qualifications for the position. He would only make a mess of such a job, and could a mess be afforded, for no matter what benefits derived? Josiah's arguments won his case. After all Josiah had a civic sense which, while not quite the sort possessed by the reformers, was a civic sense just the same.

Well, Prohibition was out of the way—that was one thing—Prohibition with its bad liquor at a high price and the undesirable source of its supply. Josiah had never been in favor of Prohibition, and his opinions didn't change as easily as most men's did. In fact he liked to think of himself as unaffected by his proximities, and with little of the chameleon in his nature. He didn't have

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time for change. He was one of the links in a chain of power and there was so much to be done. And he was so occupied in doing it. If labor were the sole measure of salvation, his own was safe. But he couldn't attend to everything. Some things were too small. These he turned over to Miss Finch—which for him constituted complete dismissal from his own mind. There was that matter of Enderby's daughter—an arrangement he'd deputed and forgotten. This forgetfulness made the shock of the girl's appearance on the scene of his existence all the more potent.

Josiah didn't like being interrupted. He had formed the habit taught him by Henry Vliet—milk at his desk instead of going out to lunch. It must be a good habit. Look at how long Vliet had cheated the undertaker! He had once suggested to Miss Finch the benefits of the method but Finch had regarded him coldly and announced her right to a free hour. He had refused to make an issue of it, and tried to remember that the more important documents couldn't be dictated between twelve and one.

Today there was so much to remember. Josiah was exceptionally busy. Without any break in his concentration on the subject at hand, he pressed his buzzer at twelve twenty. He had to press it again before the door was opened. He didn't look up at once, being still unaware that it couldn't possibly be Finch who had entered.

"Miss Finch is out to lunch," a voice announced.

"Oh," he answered.

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It took a moment for the quiet and unaccented announcement to penetrate his high preoccupation. Then he glanced up. Who was this young woman standing here before him in the place of Finch who had deserted him in the hour of his need, merely because she had the right to do so? Whoever she was, she was taller than Finch, and younger, and a thousand times better looking. In fact, Josiah had never seen anyone in the least like her—not that he recalled—and he would have recalled if he had.

“In answer to your question—” she was saying.

“I asked no question.”

“I mean your unspoken one. Well, anyway, I’m Paris Enderby.”

“Oh—” he repeated.

Her being Enderby’s daughter accounted for a good deal—at least for the shoes he immediately noticed she was wearing. They were custom made and of the grade known in the trade as “bespoke.” They must have cost about forty dollars. Josiah always looked at shoes with a professional eye. In her right hand Paris Enderby was carrying a notebook and pencil. Her left one was free, and on its fourth finger she was wearing a very curious ring. It had a dark red stone somewhat like a ruby. It wasn’t a ruby but more in the form of a seal a little smaller than a man might wear, and of an oval shape. Josiah noticed the ring and the shoes. He seemed to observe everything about her all at once.

It wasn’t, somehow, like looking at a stranger. She was looking at him too. She seemed to take his staring as the most natural thing in the world, and stared back. Finally she sat down. “My father got me the job here,” she said.

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Was she going to presume upon that? She didn't have to presume upon anything. Considering that she was so young—twenty-five at most—she was a very great lady. Josiah was not too accustomed to great ladies. The caliber of some of the men he had come to know was very high, but he knew them within limits. He was not invited to their houses. He didn't meet their families. Not that there was any reason to suppose that their families would be replicas of Paris Enderby.

Josiah's sense of her was all confused between being tremendously impressed and thinking she was the loveliest human creature it had ever been his fortune to behold. Perhaps lovely was the wrong word. She was handsome rather than pretty. You could never fancy her as being melting or soft. If you touched her the flesh would be firm and the bones present—the beautifully integrated bones. Her father, Cyrus Enderby, was a handsome man too. She resembled her father. She had the same rather heavy brows. But Enderby was heavy all through. She had a certain sparseness—was trained down to this as an athlete might be. And her eyes were different from her father's. His were old and a little dull. Hers—gray in color—were as clear and as iridescent as the sea after storm. Her feet in their fine shoes were rather long—not tiny, as Flo's were—not ridiculous for the uses to which feet must be put.

But it wasn't exactly the thing for her to have said, that she was here because her father had got her the job. Must Josiah defend to her the favor he had done? Must he explain why he had done it? This might be a trifle difficult. And yet he had an idea that she knew all about it. Maybe she did—maybe not. And going further, going into the future of his own consciousness, she probably

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knew too something which he himself found out only later—that Finch had had to create a vacancy for her when there was no vacancy. To sum it up, Paris Enderby would know exactly where she stood—or rather where she sat and why. She was very sure of herself. What cause had she to be so sure? None. Some men wouldn't like her. They would be in spite of themselves faintly afraid of her. She was distinctly not a woman for the average man. There was that about her.

"Safe as she would be in a church—" That was what old Enderby had said of her. Would she be safe? If she chose to be. It would always be her own choice whether she would be what was known as safe. And it wasn't only because she was so strong that she could defend herself that this was so. The barrier such a woman could erect between herself and danger she didn't court was indefinable. Yes, some men would be afraid of her, and even were they not afraid they would instinctively avoid her scorn. She had a strength that strength must match. Or would she be the type of woman who preferred weak men? Josiah didn't think so, if you could call it thinking, what was going on in him as he looked at her. But this wasn't any way to regard a new clerk—just sit and stare and permit yourself to be upset! It wasn't any way to regard a woman who was not a clerk or who had appeared before you in any guise you might name. Talk was never Josiah's natural refuge, but this was an occasion when talk had a value.

"Why a young lady in your position would want such a job—this isn't a very easy—"

"I suppose you think I should be having breakfast in

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bed every morning, with a French maid at my elbow saying, 'Oui, oui, Mademoiselle?'"

"Oh I shouldn't—"

"You see, I wasn't looking for an easy job, but a place where I could learn some things I wanted to know. Though I suppose there are a lot of things that happen here you wouldn't want anyone to learn."

She had the same way her father had of being casually and amiably insulting. But it wasn't a very good way for a new employee to begin. Josiah ought to tell her so.

"People have a very mistaken impression of this organization. They think we're thieves and gangsters squeezing the public out of every dollar we can find, while the truth of the matter is that we're a carefully selected group of public-spirited men trying to do the best we know how."

"That's a thought," said Paris Enderby, smiling. She had a curious and quizzical smile. Her brow wrinkled and lines came at the corners of her eyes. She was evidently not afraid of marking her face in this way.

"That it's more than a thought is, I hope, one of the things you'll learn. You say you're so anxious to learn."

"Oh, I am! And don't worry—I'm not going to make a nuisance of myself, reading misfeasance into everything I see."

"I'm sure you're not."

"And I'll do what I'm told. By the way, I came in here to take some letters." She tapped her blank notebook with her pencil.

"Can you take letters?"

"Why of course! I spent eight months of my life recently in a business school."

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"You didn't feel it was a waste of time?"

"No, why should I? It was what I wanted. Or rather it was preparation for that. I can't just come into a place like this with nothing to offer. My father wouldn't stand for it even if I would."

"You mean he wouldn't have recommended you?"

"Not for a moment. But as things are—well, I'm very accurate. In fact I'm perfectly capable of getting a job on my own—though perhaps not here. Even Miss Finch was surprised I knew what to do."

Paris Enderby had an excellent opinion of herself.

"I suppose she thought you wouldn't. How do you and Miss Finch get along? I believe she's considered something of a tyrant."

"Absolutely! But we get along. I do my work. I'm thorough. Why shouldn't we get along?" Paris asked.

She'd certainly done a thorough job on him, Josiah admitted. "No reason," he answered her.

"I think she's rather a lamb. It's all in knowing how to take her. I haven't made the mistake of catering to her in any personal way—bribing her, as you might say—"

"Oh in this office she must be used to bribery! I'm given to understand that during Prohibition she was given a case of whiskey every Friday—right off the boat. All the bootleggers vied for her favor."

Paris had a beautiful laugh. So few women laughed well. They either cackled or screamed. Josiah found himself laughing too, and he wasn't ordinarily much given to laughter. The thing might now be a prelude to a happiness to which he had heretofore been unaccustomed. Or it might be a whistle in the dark—a pretense that he wasn't afraid of what might come.

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"Miss Finch thinks very highly of you," Paris informed him.

"Does she? She could hardly say she didn't."

"She could easily say nothing."

"Very easily."

"You know she'll brain me if I don't do your letters. Come on, let's get going!"

This brought Josiah up with a start. "Say—are you working for her or for me?"

"I'm sorry."

He hadn't meant the question as a reprimand exactly, and yet that was how it must have sounded. Paris Enderby flushed a little. After all she was human.

"I wouldn't want her to brain you," Josiah reassured her. She was perfectly right, really. She was here in his office for an obvious purpose which must be fulfilled. "All right—here's a letter you can take: Cyrus Enderby—C-Y-R-U-S—Cyrus—"

"I know how to spell it, and the address, too—"

"Dear Enderby," Josiah plunged in. "Regards the matter we were discussing recently, I have been able to secure for you the information for which you asked. Nothing new, but I understand that no drastic measures will be taken and that there was not at any time reason for you to worry unduly. Nothing further will be done at the present and the rates now in force will be continued. So I was assured. I know you will be relieved to learn how things are and I am very glad they are so favorable. However, I felt certain that this would be the case. . . . By the way, your daughter is here and I have excellent reports of her work. . . . Sincerely yours. . . ."

Josiah looked up. "You see, Miss Enderby, there's

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nothing very mysterious about what we do here. Sometimes it may be a little hard to define but it's really very simple. We keep in touch with things—that's all. Men like your father come to us for information—sometimes advance information—which we are in a position to obtain."

"It's very nice of you to trouble to explain."

"Not at all—"

There was a moment of silence. Talk—just casual talk—was a refuge which seemed to be wearing a little thin.

"Are there any more letters?" Paris asked.

"Would Miss Finch expect more?"

They both laughed again. It seemed as if they were always laughing on this first day of their meeting. And there was nothing to laugh at, really. Josiah knew perfectly well that the situation could easily become anything but a laughing matter, and he suspected that Paris Enderby knew it too. The barriers between them were so heavy and their breaking would leave so much wreckage. There was still time to turn away. He ought to tell her so—tell her to go out there to Miss Finch and say she had changed her mind and didn't like the work. That would solve everything. They should never have met. They were not the same sort. He was looking at her beautiful, delicate hands and the strange ring. And then he looked at his own hands, so coarse and heavy and with a finger missing. The missing finger corresponded to the one on which Paris wore her ring. Why shouldn't she wear it? Why shouldn't she have her full complement of fingers? She had never worked in a shoe factory. In fact whatever work she'd done had been accomplished

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strictly because she had wanted to—not for eating and for keeping a roof over her lovely head. It was like her work in the business school—eight months of her life, she had said of it—well, some women took one month more than that and bore a child. Perhaps she wouldn't want a child. Perhaps there was enough in her life, just being herself, of whom she obviously thought well.

There were some records Josiah had long been intending to rearrange slightly. The simplest way would be to read them off, making the necessary revisions as he read. They were kept in a drawer in his desk here with other private papers. The drawer had a special lock, the key to which was on his key ring. The process of getting at the records took a few moments during which the girl waited without any show of impatience or curiosity.

"If you really want some work, Miss Enderby, this will take the better part of an hour."

"An hour's nothing."

"No, nothing—"

Perhaps at the end of an hour she would beg for mercy, fall exhausted at his feet. She said she was accurate. He didn't doubt her statement. He didn't doubt that she would prove more than capable of handling the rather complicated piece of dictation with which he was about to favor her. And there would then be a justification for her presence. Now there was none. What did they have in common? What could he offer her that she would take? He changed the emphasis. *What could* he offer her? Not himself, surely—scarred and battered and married.

9.

JOSIAH was a cold man, a man of habit. He was not too ready to be stirred as some men were by the female. There had once been in him certain emotions which he had largely put aside as the years had passed, much as his boy year by year discarded the more childish of his toys. That this present emotion had its points in common with those he had almost forgotten didn't make it any the less new, the less shocking. It was so deep he was never without the pull of it. There was no waking moment and—it seemed—no sleeping one when the image of Paris Enderby was not before him. Anything else he saw was seen side by side with this. Her hands, the slight and varying movements of her lovely face, her rather careless but expensive clothes, the way she walked or stood or sat, and how her hair swept back from the clear broad brow sometimes furrowed—all these were scored into Josiah deeper than any mark left by tattoo or branding. Paris was part of himself suddenly. And yet how could she be, when he'd never known her save in this little office here round the bend in the corridor on the third floor—when he'd never touched her nor put into any word for her to hear the way he felt?

He was not normally too entranced with his feelings, nor regarded them normally as a basis for his actions. His involvement with Flo—his life's involve-

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ment—had been a lesson to him there. He lived with Flo because she was his wife, and she had never been to him exactly distasteful. They were never enough together for the attraction he felt for her to have wholly ceased. Being a man of habit as he was, the habit of her was ingrained and was in no way part of his resentment against her.

And were it not for Flo he would not have had his boy of whom he was so proud. Up to now he had thought more of his boy than he had of anyone. He didn't see him much but he planned to as time went on. Some day they would go on a vacation together—just the two of them. In a few years perhaps. . . . Amos had once said something about taking boys to the Maine woods. He must find out from Amos more about the place. It was good for a man to have a son. The boy was a fine boy, as Amos had said, and a handsome boy. What was it Amos had said? "A true Madden—or Bently perhaps—" Josiah junior was tall like the Maddens, clever like the Bentlys, and with the something more—a sunniness of disposition, a winning quality, on which Amos had also commented. Something of his mother in him. . . . He was friendly as she had a tendency to be. And Josiah junior might so well have been short like the Bentlys, stupid like Flo and unfriendly like the Maddens. As it was, he was a child of whom even Paris with her doubtless magnificent standards of comparison would have approved. He had been given all the advantages. The school to which Flo had sent him had done a great deal for him. He wouldn't have to work in a shoe factory. He had never roamed the streets.

Sometimes Paris reminded Josiah of the boy. There

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was still in her a faint trace of coltishness and she had that same fine-grained silken skin with which the younger of the two Josiahs was still graced. Josiah senior dared say that Paris could throw a ball swift and true, and run, and throw herself too, if she so wished, straight upon the ground. He wondered about that, and Paris in the woods with the sky showing through the leafage. What was the creature who lived in a tree, or came from it, or was a tree? Dryad—that was it! A dryad was a sort of goddess—fabulous. “When the hounds of spring are on winter’s traces—The mother of months in meadow or plain—Fills the shadows and windy places—With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain—And the brown bright nightingale amorous—”

Where had Josiah found that? In a book doubtless—a book belonging to Amos. Amos had always been bringing books home with him. Josiah used to look into them sometimes, and this was something he now rediscovered, and an odd thing for him to have carried with him sealed for all these years. He couldn’t remember how the poem went on. Poetry—he had always ignored it—and yet there were men who gave their lives to the writing of it! That would have been a strange occupation. Someday perhaps he would ask Paris if she knew the piece and who it was by. Of course he could write to Amos and ask him. Only he wouldn’t. Amos would be the last person whom he would take into his confidence—the last of a list of such, there being not one shoulder upon which he could weep. In his agony he was quite alone. “The brown bright nightingale amorous—” It was evidently a

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poem about love. Love was a matter which ought not to have been as new to Josiah as it now seemed. He looked at his own image as a man concerned with love and found the sight odd but somehow not unbelievable. You had to believe a fact.

There were women it would be easy to get to know. You kidded with them, as you might say, easily injecting a groundwork of purpose into the lightness. Perhaps, and ever so casually, you asked them out to dinner. You paid them other little attentions—tickets to shows—things like that. You went for a while so, feeling your way, being careful, and finally you might be rewarded. You might. Josiah had seen it done often enough. He'd seen it done right in the insurance office, and he didn't doubt but that it was done elsewhere. There was always an end in view, and if you failed to achieve this you were inept. But at least you'd had a run for your money! None of this would be useful or apply. It would have been so simple if it had. But in such case Paris would not have been Paris, but someone else.

There would be peace in her arms. Josiah could die that way if need be. And all the covered rages in him and all the hungers and the restless and vaulting desires for greatness and for power would be forever stilled. Which would be a pity, perhaps.

At first the complication in Josiah's life was wholly personal. That is to say, it didn't spread out to affect the lives of others. On the surface everything was extraordinarily as it had been before—which in a sense

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made the personal problem all the more difficult. He could go on forever giving Miss Enderby dictation, having now and then a few moments—so very few—of extra-curricular chat with her, looking at her and she returning the look. But what did such procedure get him? As a practical man, which he still was, he often asked himself this question, and the answer which, as a practical man, he was forced to submit was wholly negative. But it must have got him something and made some basic change in him, because he was obsessed more and more by the fear that sooner or later he would crack. He had never considered the danger of cracking before—had never had to.

Some men would have taken to drink under such circumstances, some to other women, some to neglect of their own wives. But such easements of his state were not for Josiah. Besides, they would have solved so little. Nothing would, save his possession of this girl for whom no one could have known—or even suspected—that the puritanical Josiah Madden had fallen.

Why did he have to become linked always with women who were conspicuous in their own right? Flo had belonged so markedly at one end of the scale, and now here Paris was, belonging so markedly at the other! Never for Josiah a happy and comfortable middle note. Flo had been too cheap and Paris was too priceless. If Paris had been just an ordinary woman matters could have been so easily adjusted, seduction being the main issue then—which it somehow wasn't quite, as things were. Adultery would not have been too much outside the pattern of life of a man such as

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Josiah had become—no open scandal to wreck a career greatly promising. People wouldn't talk, and if they did only behind their hands. No one need know really—not any more than they knew now, when there was nothing to be known. The city was too big. People were not concerned with a man's private life here as they would be in a New England town.

It had been in such a town that Josiah had become unduly intimate with a waitress at the Lindsay House. He had married her. He was married to her still. Not that Flo would hear anything except from him—except if he went to her and asked her for a divorce. And he had as much chance of the request being granted as a snowball had in hell. He thought of this as he thought of so much else, turning it over in his neat mind and looking at it. Though he cherished no false hope that Paris would marry him even if he were free. But at least then he would be free to court her, to see her. You couldn't be killed for trying. Yes, he thought of divorce, but Flo wouldn't. She was sitting far too pretty, just as things were. He had money but not enough to buy her off—not as much now as she was perfectly aware his prospects were in that regard. Flo had a shrewd sense of prospects.

And there was the boy to think about. There was a small voice in Josiah which would never have given him any peace if he had deserted the boy. Flo wouldn't divorce him certainly and more certainly she wouldn't hand the child over to him free and clear. No court would make her. She was a good mother, and a good wife too. Her goodness could be proved—her present goodness—and anything less was wholly of the past and

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could hardly be dragged forth in support of any claim. Josiah was trapped and knew it.

It was too bad. Had he not been trapped he could have cherished the hope—however remote—that Paris might consider him as a husband. Such a marriage would have caused talk of course, but not damaging talk. He was known to be an able man. With her at his side, he might have raised himself to great heights. But why think of the impossible? There was another plan which had a trifle more likelihood of success—try to get her on any terms at all. He might succeed. She was a woman, not a child, and he a fine figure of a man. He wasn't just the typical city politician. And not too old—just turned forty. That was the prime of life, forty, for a man, unless you were a prize fighter or an aviator or something like that.

He would have to approach her with due caution, but it might be managed. He could suggest some meeting quite casually, quite harmlessly. If he were to be seen with her outside the office what could anyone really say? His personal reputation was quite unsullied here in the city. Though oddly enough, this last would seem all the more reason why he would not be the escort of Paris Enderby without having a fell purpose in view. It wasn't that everyone knew who he was. But if they didn't know, seeing him with Paris, they would be apt to ask. The two together would not pass unnoticed in a crowd. In fact they would be about as unnoticed as a pair of lions escaped from a circus, who had happened into a church on Sunday morning. Josiah had trod the covered ways a little too habitually to have been happy with any such circumstance. Speaking of

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plans, there was a third one—complete and utter renunciation. But renouncing Paris or the hope of her—even never seeing her again—would be for Josiah like entering a room hermetically sealed. Her very existence provided the air in his lungs. Even his boy, his son and namesake, was not enough to keep him alive without her presence—or so he felt.

He kept thinking of his mother. He hadn't thought so much about his mother in a long time. He had along with everything else an instinct to escape his plight, and his mother could somehow help him in this. How, he didn't know. His mother's long talked-of visit hadn't yet taken place. He must arrange it soon. His mother was strangely on his conscience the day he received the telegram announcing her death. There had been no period of illness—no warning. It seemed to Josiah that there was no warning of anything any more.

Yes, there had been a warning of a sort. The last time he had seen his mother she had made some comment to him concerning his own return for her right and proper burial. He had never thought it would be so soon. Sixty-five wasn't old—wasn't time for death. And she had always been so strong, like coiled wire—so strong and so active. He remembered her house—the one he had bought for her—always immaculate. And why shouldn't it be, she had countered, when this perfection was remarked. She had nothing to do, her brood having grown and her husband having died! After all it was a comparatively small house despite its three stories. It wasn't like Judge Anders' place up on the hill. She asked neither for praise nor pity and she had given none, save praise to the Lord and pity to the unavoidably weak. Josiah was pre-

sumptuous to think she could have saved him in his concern with Paris, or would have tried to do so. He was a married man. He had made his bed—let him lie on it—that would have been her attitude. And would that have saved him?

The tragedy of her passing was overlaid for Josiah by the thick padding of his own troubles. These weren't anything you could leave behind when you took the train. In one sense they must be put to one side for now, and in a sense they were present. What if Paris Enderby took this week of his absence to throw up her job? She wouldn't do that—she couldn't! And yet it was exactly what she could do if she so wished. She didn't have to work for a living. She was not the sort of young woman usually to be found in an office. It was early summer and her family had a place in the country. She might be wanting to go there. No one could stop her.

Mrs. Madden had died in her sleep—or so the doctor thought—and peacefully, it was clear. It must have been like that, for the window shades were drawn and her clothes for the morning laid neatly on a chair. It was two days before anyone knew about it. And had it not been for the milk man who discovered milk bottles accumulating on the back porch, it might have been longer. He mentioned the bottles to Mrs. Madden's daughter Ruth who lived up the street a ways, on his same route. Ruth had become a white-faced stoutish woman and had lost the looks she had once possessed.

"You should have stopped by more often," Josiah told her.

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"I tried to look after her as best I could, but what with the children and the house and all it was hard to get around. And she wasn't one who took kindly to being fussed over."

"I know how it was."

Josiah put no real blame on Ruth, and certainly not on his other sister who lived at some distance. He blamed himself. Sending money regularly hadn't been sufficient. He ought to have shared the responsibility more fully.

"It would have been good sense," said Ruth, "if she'd married the Judge. He was after her right up to this last spell he had."

"Is the Judge sick?"

"Just failing. He's not a young man. They say he carried on something terrible when he heard the news—wanted to come right down, but Dr. Falls wouldn't let him—gave strict orders—and I guess he wasn't in any shape to get dressed by himself."

"I presume he won't be able to come to the funeral."

"I presume not. He sent lovely flowers. Mother liked flowers."

"I know she did."

"She'll have plenty of them now. A lot of people sent. Some regular, boughten pieces came clear from Boston. You planning to send some? I thought maybe some lilies right inside and then a set piece—"

"Here—here's twenty dollars. You attend to it!" Josiah was accustomed to flowers at funerals. Political obsequies were always heavy with them.

Ruth smoothed the crisp bill in her rather work-roughened hand. "I can get something real handsome for that."

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Yes, here Josiah was, just as his mother had said he would be. He was here in flesh, if not in spirit. So much talk—so many people. There was Ruth and Ruth's husband and Lillian and Lillian's husband and Amos and his new wife. They all had gathered, united, or rather reunited, by this slender thread of kinship. Mrs. Madden had never been a woman to draw people to her in life, but in death it was fitting that they come.

Flo hadn't. This omission was criticized, but it was a criticism Flo didn't have to face, not being present. Josiah had not urged her when he saw she didn't want to come. He knew that his mother's death concerned Flo even less than it did most of the people who had put in their so suitable appearance. Most wives would have thought it their duty, as perhaps it would have been if they had thought so, but Flo's thought didn't run that way. She was a bargainer about duty, doing only so much of it as she would be the loser by not doing. The house, the boy, Josiah—none of these ever suffered through neglect. For the rest, she had lapsed more and more into a curious small selfishness, an occupation with the infinitesimal—diets, face creams, clothes. She was the kind of woman who dressed elaborately in order to go to the corner mail box. She must have had at least a passing regret at not being able to show the home town the latest thing in millinery. But she had shaken the dust of the place from her skirts once for all and didn't intend to acquire a new layer—not even to display herself in all her glory. Yet she wasn't a bad sort. She was a good deal easier to get along with than these New England kin.

These people were gathered together for the purposes of a sorrow they none of them had. What they did

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possess in common was a sort of veiled enmity, especially towards Josiah. They resented his success, the energy he had which had also been his mother's. With her this was now stilled, but with Josiah it wasn't and would carry him on to Lord knew what undeserved triumphs. They resented his having gone away, which they regarded as desertion. They resented the fact that he was a creature they must envy, and looked with disfavor on his finely tailored clothes and his well filled wallet. They would have been far more friendly if he'd returned to them via a box car and asked for a meal. As things were, acceptance of their hospitality was almost a favor he conferred. The husbands of both his sisters were struggling through the hard times, and he wasn't. There was no justice. Josiah was glad Flo hadn't come.

All this was unadmitted but it was there like a persistent and unwanted presence in Ruth's house where they were all now assembled. Josiah had come for his mother's right and proper burial but he would never have to come here again—not if he didn't want to. And he couldn't fancy why he would ever want to.

"Someone said you weren't in insurance any more." It was Tom Osborn speaking. Tom was Ruth's husband.

"Oh I'm in it—"

"And working at politics too?"

"That's right—"

"Must keep you steppin'—"

"Some."

"And turned Democrat too?" Tom Osborn had always been one to ask questions. His hardware store was a center for the local gossip.

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"That's right—"

"Well, nothing to stop you, I guess."

"Nothing."

"They say city politics is pretty crooked."

"They used to be at one time—not any more—"

"No more graft? No more corruption?"

"We don't tolerate graft or corruption for a moment!"

"You don't say?"

Josiah did say. In fact he'd said it so often that he sometimes believed it himself.

"I never did hear just what your job is," Tom went on.

"I'm one of the party executives, working in very close touch with the chief."

"But the mayor isn't a Democrat!"

"Not at present—no. But the party still has to function."

"It would be puzzling if you didn't understand it."

"Yes, I guess it would be." Josiah saw no occasion to admit that it was puzzling even if you did. It was something you weren't meant to understand—not wholly.

"Well, you seem to be making out all right. Insurance business must be good" Tom's tone changed suddenly and became more eager. "What you going to do with the house?"

"What house?"

"The house you gave your mother. It's yours now."

"All mine?"

"Yes. She made a will leaving you everything she had. She told us about it a while back. Guess that's why we none of us went around to see her much—you being the only one she favored, why—" Tom's wife, Ruth, shut him up at that. He'd talked enough.

"I didn't know," Josiah said.

There was a moment of silence which Ruth broke: "We weren't going to tell you because you'd find it out soon enough and then you could figure what you planned to do."

Josiah made the grand gesture. "When the estate's settled I'll sell the property and divide everything up between the three of you, plus a division of any cash on hand. I don't happen to need it any more, and you do."

"Why that's very generous of you!"

They all turned to the woman who had spoken. In that company Amos's wife was something of an outsider, neither kin nor native. Josiah always remembered it of her that hers was the one expression of gratitude that he received.

"Why not at all," he answered her thanks.

The rest were relieved, but you couldn't call them grateful. He hadn't thought they would be. A few thousand dollars—and this was all it could possibly amount to—wouldn't matter much to him, the way he was fixed, and to them it might make all the difference. Besides, he'd have them off his conscience forever.

After his wife's reproof Tom Osborn had lapsed into a semi-somnolence undisturbed even by Josiah's generosity. The other brother-in-law, Les Ely—Les being short for Lester—was looking out of the window. He was always doing that, and looking at the cars which passed. He ran a repair depot and filling station about thirty miles out on the turnpike to Boston, so his interest had a professional tinge. He now turned. He was a tall gawky man of the type of gawkiness usual in boys who have not quite attained their full growth. He had

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long passed this stage of course, but his clothes—or at least his Sunday suit—must have stemmed from it. His hands and wrists showed too much below his cuffs and his trousers didn't meet his shoe tops.

"I was thinkin', Josiah, you'd want some of the fixin's, maybe?" Les put it as a question. "You see, Lillian's had her eye on the mahogany dresser, but if you want it—"

"I don't want it."

"If Lillian gets the dresser I ought to have the four-poster," Ruth put in.

"Don't they match?" Lillian was a little sharp about it.

"No," said Ruth, "they don't match!" Ruth was a year and a half older than Lillian, and had early formed the habit of having the last word.

Josiah spoke calmly: "I'll see that you're both taken care of." He turned again to Amos's wife. "Perhaps there's something in the house that you would like?" he asked of her.

"I might. I've been there so rarely I don't remember the things at all."

"I'll see that you get a look at them."

He noted a number of things about Amos's wife which had escaped him at first glance. She reminded him in some way of Paris, though there was scant physical resemblance. It was partly the voice. She spoke with the same quiet and unaccented tone. Perhaps in this present company she was the only possible comparison he had for Paris, and it was a necessity that he make one. She was pregnant—which of course Paris wasn't—and in that stage of pregnancy not too obvious but disorganizing to the figure. She had nice eyes and soft hair. She smiled. It was the only smile Josiah had seen since he'd

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left the city. "You mustn't rob yourself," she said. "Mrs. Madden might want to make a choice."

This was the first mention of Flo as having any right of this sort. The other two women looked at Mrs. Amos coldly, but they couldn't blame her too much. She didn't know Flo. She might not know anything about her, Amos being disinterested and close mouthed.

"It's unlikely she'll do that," said Josiah, "and all I want is a little china that's there and my mother's Bible."

Amos stared. "What do you want Mother's Bible for?"

"I don't know what for. But I thought I'd like it."

"And that's all?" verified Lillian. "Just some china and the Bible?"

"That's all."

Relief was rife again. But Josiah wasn't being noble. Flo had finally got her blond wood furniture and the Bently mahogany would hardly favor it.

"That's the Judge's car stopping here," Les announced.

Josiah rose. "Is the Judge in it?"

"No, just Max. Max has been with the Judge a long time now—before you went away, I guess it was."

"You mean Max Keg? Why I got Max the job!"

"That's right," said Ruth. It was somehow creditable to her brother—a credit small enough for her to admit—that Josiah's recommendation would get a man a job as desirable as that . . .

Josiah joined Les at the window and had a good view of Max, who had got out of the car and was coming up the walk. He would hardly have recognized him if Les hadn't said it was he. The transformation was

astonishing. Max had had in the past a sort of lurking furtiveness overlaid at moments with braggadocio. He didn't lurk now nor brag. He didn't have to. He was wearing with a touch of swagger a well pressed chauffeur's uniform. The swagger might have grown from the old Max. The rest was from the Judge.

"What do you know?" said Josiah, asking the question of himself, and then to the others—"I guess I'm going up to the Judge's."

Ruth seemed disappointed. "I've got some nice ham and potato salad. I thought you'd be here for supper."

"Save some for me—" Josiah reached for his hat and was at the door just as Max was ringing the bell.

If the Judge hadn't sent Max for the purpose of getting him he could still make use of this heaven-brought chance to leave. He liked Amos's wife—she reminded him of Paris—but for the rest he didn't care if he never laid eyes on any of them again. And he would have to for a little while still, until his mother's precious body was laid in her grave. He had been planning the respite of taking Mrs. Amos over to the house to see the furniture, but this was better. He'd never felt jealous of Amos before but now he did—just a little—curiously jealous. Why should Amos have a wife who was so superior to the wife he had himself—a wife who reminded him, however faintly, of Paris Enderby? It took all kinds of women to make a world and he hadn't known the right kind soon enough. Flo was all right in her way. She'd done pretty well for herself—not only in marrying him, but in the way she'd taken advantage of her opportunities. He would never have thought she had it in her to improve so much. She'd learned, and was still learning.

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His mother had once said she was turning out better than expected. And the Judge had said the years might change her. But giving Flo all the credit in the world, she was still Josiah's wife. She'd kept him from looking about and finding a woman really to suit him, finding Paris before it was too late.

He put out one hand to the grasp of his old henchman, and the other on his shoulder: "Max—"

"Mr. Madden—"

The two looked at each other. They had both changed, and yet in both there was something of the past which bound them.

"A lot of water's gone under the bridge, Max—"

"I guess you're right, Mr. Madden." The Judge's messenger wagged a finger in the direction of the car. Josiah was conscious of eyes upon them as they walked down the path.

"How's the Judge?" Josiah asked, getting in the car.

"Not so good. He hasn't been right for a long time."

"So I heard. What seems to be the matter with him?"

"Stomach trouble I guess it is. And then the other night—very sudden—he was taken real bad."

"I want to see him."

"You will in a couple o' minutes." Max drove for a moment without speaking. "How's Mrs. Madden—I mean your wife? She didn't come with you, did she?"

"No, she didn't come. She never liked it here too well, you know."

"Not too well," Max said. "I bet she's crazy about the city!"

"She likes the city all right."

"That's swell." Max lapsed into silence.

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They were on their way up the hill now towards the Judge's house. That was one thing which hadn't changed at all. It was still of red brick, with dark green blinds and a porch which went around on three sides. It covered a great deal of territory for one man to occupy alone. Even the iron stag on the lawn covered territory. It was so big.

"I'd have brought him down the day he heard about your mother—just bundled him up in a couple of blankets and brought him down—but if anything had happened to him because I did—well, I don't figure on being tried for murder. I never did figure on it."

"There's something in what you say." People used to think Max Keg wasn't honest. If not being honest meant not pretending, why then he wasn't. Josiah would have use for a man like him. In fact he had promised to send for him when things were right. But as things were now he could hardly take him away from the Judge.

"It was too bad," Max went on, "that Mrs. Madden wouldn't change her mind."

"About what?"

"Marrying the Judge. She was the only one around who could stand up to his housekeeper. It would have been as good as a cage of weasels, watching them."

"That's not a very flattering way to put it!"

"I don't mean it any way wrong. I liked your mother—I liked her fine—I'd have been rooting for her every minute—and putting my money on her too. I'm coming to the funeral if you don't mind—"

"Why would I mind? I don't suppose the Judge will come?"

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"You can see for yourself."

The wheels of the car crunched into the gravelled circle before the house. The front door opened and a nurse in a white uniform stood framed in it. The vista thus disclosed was as long and as vaulted as it had ever been, one hall or library or drawing room leading into another. But it was a relief from the crowded habitation Josiah had just left.

"Mr. Madden?" the woman asked.

"Yes."

"Come this way, please."

Warned as he had been, it wasn't too much of a shock to Josiah to find Salem Anders grown into a very old man, and a sick old man. He was sitting in a wheeled chair, and you felt had it not been for the pillows back of his head he would not have been able to sit at all. The chair was placed before an open coal fire, though the afternoon was warm. The striped dressing gown revealed a throat whose cords and wattles were more of fowl than man. Once it had been Anders' flesh that hung loose from his bones, now it was merely his skin. He looked Josiah over for a long look and said a strange thing by way of greeting:

"That's all I wanted to know!"

Josiah put out his hand. The hand that met it was cold and a little wet. The back of it was patterned like veined marble. "I'm afraid I don't quite understand—"

"I just wanted to know that you were doing all right, and I see you are."

"However I'm doing, I owe it to you."

"Poppycock!"

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It was a strange last word for a man with any claim to greatness. *Poppycock*—just like that.

To the dentist Cohen was granted the privilege of observing Josiah in his most impressive functioning. He made everything smooth, sending for the right people, seeing that the right things were done at the right moments. Had it not been for him there would have been something near to chaos. Cohen had heard that Josiah was coming—of course he would be—but he hadn't counted on his being in town so long, and had been concerned as to how the time would be for any satisfying visit. And here Josiah was, staying for the Judge's funeral as well as for Mrs. Madden's. It was too bad that Salem Anders had died, but as he had, what better moment could he have picked than the one which found Josiah at his side, come on a journey of sorrow quite other? Anders was singularly alone in the world, without wife or children, and with more distant relatives scattered to the four winds. But what need of these now, as Josiah was present and functioning and with the help of his trusted lieutenant Max Keg being able to do everything that had to be done? In this strange land of Dr. Cohen's adoption it was the way things happened. There was no logic about it—no order—nothing anyone could have laid out by plan or theory.

People thought of America in terms of wheat fields and cities, mountains and railroads, the steel of Pittsburgh and the oil of Texas, big cars like the vehicle in which Max Keg was rushing about with on his multiple errands. They thought of it in terms of an immigrant

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like Cohen himself, and others unlike him. In Cohen's view they thought a little large. The place was too big and too disordered to attempt such thinking. It would be as illegible and as misty then as any outlook aiming at too great an area. The view must be clearer, closer, narrower. And what could be easier to the eye than the narrowness inherent in the character of Josiah Madden and all his works?

Josiah was so bland, so tremendously capable. He had an aura of success about him rare enough in these difficult days. To Cohen, struggling and shabby—lonely too, and growing lonelier—and with patients owing him money they couldn't easily pay, the sight of his friend so was like a drink from a divine spring. For this short time you wouldn't have known that the town was sorely pressed. You could forget that factories were closed down or closing or running on part shifts, that factory hands were idle and hungry and that the local banks didn't know where the cash was coming from to pay off their obligations. Men made the journey to the Judge's funeral from Boston and even from Washington. They stayed at the Lindsay House, there being nowhere else for them to stay, and spent money. The manager of the Lindsay, who had owed Cohen a bill of ninety-six dollars for many months, paid him something on account. To see Josiah sending a telegram, meeting a train, making arrangements with an undertaker on a scale with which that dignitary was unfamiliar, you would think this the best of all possible eras in all possible worlds.

Cohen had once said that to him Josiah's leaving was like being interrupted in a laboratory experiment. Now

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the experiment could be viewed again when the chemicals had blended and aged. Interrupted as it had been, and going on unseen by the watcher, it had come to a stage of proof where a good deal was visible through the microscope. At least the process had continued, and the dentist's present sight of it filled him with an immeasurable satisfaction. It wasn't his own experiment—he had no false pretension as to that—but it was one which it had been his privilege to observe, if only here and there. His curiosity was by no means wholly met, but it was far better than nothing. He would never know, no more than Josiah in actuality knew himself, now the thing had come about—certainly not through any orderly progression—but here it was. The chemicals were almost at the explosive point, the animalcule had multiplied and grown.

There would be a still later development and at last the whole thing might blow out the laboratory, or at least its windows. And yet the work wouldn't go for nothing. It was out of this stage that a later stage would stem, and a later one beyond that and beyond that. Everything passed and changed and Josiah himself would sometime struggle against his own eventual destruction. Now he was in full blast. And seeing him thus, you might think him indestructible. At least that was what you would think to look at him and to listen to the words he uttered, spaced as these were in such a neat economy of silence.

These two who had just died, the Bently who had married a Madden and the eminent jurist who, it was common talk, had begged her to try her luck again, they had seen changes too, but had never been cast into

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the heat of them—if heat there had been. The passing of Josiah and men such as he might have something more to it than the mere simplicity of death. Cohen didn't know. But he was entirely aware that he did not, and that there was much to know—increasingly much—which he might never compass. That tiny cloud in the sky, no bigger than a man's hand, might stay as it was or be dispelled or it might gather to engulf even such men as Josiah had become—men tall and strong and avid of their own fates.

Josiah had never given Cohen a nickel or a meal, never had done him any material favor such as he had done and was doing to a good many people who might have been named. But Cohen felt towards him a sort of gratitude lacking in them, and no envy and no disfavor. The doctor's work dealt wholly with matter of considerable weight considering its size—cement and gold and silver and points and files of metal—but his thought was ever occupied with the imponderable. Josiah's existence affected Cohen's own in no material way whatever—you could hardly list as this the hotel manager's payment—and yet he was grateful with something of the effulgence of gratitude native to his race.

People were not supposed to be happy at Mrs. Madden's funeral or at Judge Anders' or at any funeral at all. But Dr. Cohen, sitting so modestly in a rear side pew—further back at the lawyer's services than at the widow's, the church being fuller—had on both these sad occasions an ecstasy of bliss which did not in any unfit sense reflect on either of the departed spirits. He had admired them both on the rare occasions when

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either had crossed his path. They crossed it now with a peculiar intensity, and must, he hoped, rejoice at Josiah as much as he rejoiced himself. Though they walked through the valley of the shadow their souls must be restored as was his own.

10.

IT WOULD seem from all this that Josiah—ostensibly a public man—was at this epoch of his career so bemused by his own personal preoccupations that he could give but scant thought of his legitimate labors. This was not by any means the full case. However, the man was human and not a machine, though for many years he had worked almost as if he were, seeing things narrowly—the trees instead of the forest. He had never had much to do with unknown quantities. It was his late friend, Judge Anders, who had said to him that in dealing with matters within his comprehension he never—or rarely—made a mistake. “In matters outside it?” Josiah had asked. “Oh well, you can’t understand everything—” Then Josiah—“Some things have never been brought to my attention.”

That was an alibi but true enough. Love—death—not really brought to his attention, not before now. And the range of such attention was always somewhat narrow. All for love and the world well lost. . . . Perhaps the world was lost already. Josiah’s mother was dead. He realized suddenly that he’s been very close to her—closer to her now perhaps than ever before. He couldn’t explain it but that was how it was. He kept thinking about her when he wasn’t thinking about his work or about Paris. He was like her in some ways, and it was a

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resemblance which he didn't outgrow. And yet he did so many things which she would never have done. She, for instance, would have had little use for Max Keg, and considered him good riddance and not wanted him to come to the city or got him a soft job there so that he might come easily. Arrangements for this were completed shortly after the Judge's funeral.

Max—a bachelor—was easily at home in the city. He promptly obtained for himself a bachelor apartment which, as he put it, had the rooms over the Judge's garage skinned a mile. There was a living room and kitchenette and a sort of dressing room attached to the bathroom. It was so self-contained—so designed for the purposes of Max's life. He planned to have girls there and to give parties—some small and quiet, and some large and not so quiet. The walls, he had been assured, were sound-proof. This was one of the features, of which, obviously, there were many. As soon as he was settled he showed the place off to Josiah with much pride.

"You could have it any time you wanted it," he told him.

"What do you mean, I could have it?"

"Just what I say. I'd give you the key and not come round."

"I guess not, Max. That's hardly my style—"

"Well if you ever change your mind—it wouldn't inconvenience me any. It's private you know—it would be nobody's business—"

"Not even yours, Max?"

"Say—you know me—" Max turned. His disappointment was clear.

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Josiah thought the offer funny just at first. And then it wasn't quite so funny. He had to close his thought to the vista of
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there were such a thing. He could fancy Paris looking at the garment Max had so thoughtfully provided for his guests, one eyebrow cocked perhaps—looking at it but not wearing it. Of what was he thinking? The whole place was tawdry. But Max himself didn't mind tawdriness. Max wasn't like Josiah or like Josiah's mother. He wasn't a puritan, even though a puritan gone a little wrong and pulled in several directions at once. Max had designed his apartment for the purposes of his own life, which were never the purposes of Josiah's.

"What are you going to do this summer?"

"What should I do?"

"I mean your family have a place in the country. I rather thought you might be wanting to go there."

"You wish me to go?"

"No, not at all!" Josiah was more hasty and more emphatic in his denial than he had intended being. Paris looked at him. "Of course I don't wish you to go," he said more calmly.

"Then that's all right. I might go for a week or so—not longer—when Miss Finch gets back from her own vacation."

"Miss Finch finds you exceptionally competent," Josiah said.

"Yes, so she was kind enough to say. She said I made her work easier as there was so much I could do that before I came no one but she was allowed a look at."

"Competent," said Josiah, "trustworthy and conscientious. But we mustn't impose on you, Nellie Finch and I—"

"Impose?"

"Yes. When my mother died I got to thinking that maybe I'd come back to find you gone—tired of the job—I mean when I went away—" Josiah was a little awkward about it.

"I was so very sorry about your mother," said Paris. "It was hard, coming so suddenly." Paris had never spoken of his mother's death before but then Josiah had never spoken of it to her. "She must have been a very remarkable woman."

"Why do you say that? You didn't know her."

"I sense it somehow. And you were devoted to her in your own way. I don't think you care much for most people."

Josiah supposed that was true. Just his mother and his son and Paris herself. Who else was there to have his devotion or to merit it? "I supported her of course, but I ought to have done more—I realize that now—"

"You mean, you didn't support her well enough?"

"More than well enough. It wasn't that. I ought to have gone back to visit her. I was rather planning on it and then she died. It bothers me. I suppose I have a conscience I'd be better off without. But why trouble you with it?" Josiah asked suddenly. And then, suddenly again: "Well I'm glad you're not quitting. But it's getting so hot here, and with all your friends away—"

"Oh, I have plenty of friends who aren't away!"

"I suppose you have."

Naturally, a girl such as Paris Enderby would have friends—young men remaining in the city. One evening Josiah saw two of them.

It was the beginning of July and the weather was

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brutal. Josiah and Flo had taken a house at a resort which was within commuting distance. It was a place quite popular with the political elect, and there was a nice beach for the boy to play on. It was because of the boy, in fact, that they were there.

On this particular evening Josiah and some friends had driven over to a nearby amusement park. There was an excellent chophouse and they'd had dinner. Business was discussed, as always, and they sat rather long over their meal. Afterwards they strolled through the park watching the roller coasters and the Ferris wheel and taking a shot or so in the shooting galleries. It was unexpectedly pleasant. A good salt breeze was blowing in from the sea and on one of the piers a band concert was in progress. Back from the board walk was a beer garden with artificial arbors and tables and entertainment provided by Swiss yodellers. They were supposed to be Swiss, anyway. The men wore short pants and the women full skirts and tight bodices. They did some folk dancing as well as yodelling. This was the place where Josiah saw the two young men who were friends of Paris. She was sitting at a table with them drinking beer. One of the young men had evidently descended to beer from stronger fare and was making a good deal of noise. Paris was trying to quiet him. Josiah excused himself to his friends and came over to the table.

"Are you all right?" he greeted Paris.

"Why—Mr. Madden—of all people! This is Bill Brown, Mr. Madden, and Jeffry Blye."

The sober one—Blye—got to his feet. "Won't you join us?"

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"For a moment—"

"I know who you are," Brown got out. His speech was faintly slurred, his movements wavering—"You're Joe Madden, the politician—you're Patsy's boss—"

"Why do you call her Patsy?"

"All her friends call her Patsy. But you're not a friend of hers, so you wouldn't know—would you?"

"Shut up, Bill—"

"No! I don't get a chance to meet many politicians. I won't shut up."

"All right then, don't—"

"You see, Mr. Madden, Paris is no name for a girl. Paris is a city. Were you ever there?"

"Yes, during the war, or part of it. I was through there several times."

"Hey, waiter—bring the gentleman some beer! He's been to Paris. And what did you do in the war, Mr. Madden?"

"Just a non-com fighting—"

"They say the non-coms are very commendable. Very commendable. The army couldn't get along without 'em. I was only a kid then. We had a German cook. My mother was always afraid she'd put poison in the coffee, but she never did. Say—what do you think of the Germans? Having killed your share, your opinion might be valuable. This new Nazi party—what about that?"

"It seems to me we have troubles enough of our own—"

The young man was wound up like a clock. Sometimes liquor did that. He seemed harmless and you had to admit him handsome. The weakness in the face was

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less structural than acquired. Josiah had once wondered if Paris liked weak men.

"Say, Mr. Madden—I brought these people down here in my car and they say I can't drive 'em back because I'm drunk. You must have seen lots of drunks. Do you think I'm drunk?"

Josiah looked at him more closely. "Why yes I do."

"There's your answer!" said the sober one.

"And I certainly think your friends are right in not letting you drive," Josiah went on. "Besides, in case you don't know it there are rather heavy penalties attached to driving a car when under the influence of—"

"Aren't you holy?" Bill Brown cut him off.

"I'll do the driving," Paris said.

She was wearing a white hat that had no crown. It was tied around her head like a broad ribbon—little more. Her white linen suit was in need of pressing. She gave the effect of a rather boyish angel who had come down from heaven and was having more of an evening on earth than originally bargained for. And yet she was not in any dire need of rescue.

Josiah turned to her. "I'm sure you're quite capable of handling the situation."

"Quite," said Paris, "but it was good of you to find out."

"*Was* good—" It was evidently good no more, and she expected him now to leave her to her fate. He wasn't quite ready to do that yet. "You must know I'd do anything I could—"

Brown caught this assurance which must have sounded a little more personal than Josiah had intended it to sound. "Say—what's going on here? What's going on?"

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The fellow lifted his half-emptied glass and dribbled its contents deliberately until the slop oozed over in the direction of the glass which a waiter had set down before Josiah.

"What did you think was going on?" Josiah asked. It was a foolish thing to say, but he didn't know when he'd encountered anyone he had disliked more heartily, so he didn't care much what he said or whether it was foolish or whether it wasn't.

"You're so afraid something's going to happen to her! Well—nothing's going to—not a damn thing—if it's any of your business, which it isn't—even if you are nuts about her—"

"Don't be ridiculous, Bill!" This hastily from Paris.

Josiah laid down a quarter to pay for his untasted beer and rose.

"You're leaving, sir?" politely inquired Paris's other escort.

"I think so." Leaving was certainly indicated now, even if it hadn't been before. Josiah looked again at Paris: "You're sure there's nothing?"

"Nothing. I'll see you in the morning."

"Yes, I hope so—"

"Was that in the nature of a dirty doubt?" Bill Brown inquired.

"No," said Josiah, "just a natural one."

"Pay no attention, sir," the man named Blye put in.

Josiah left finally, with the disagreeable sense that he had made a fool of himself. He decided he disliked the sober one rather more heartily than he did the drunk one. He was so efficiently watchful—so neatly polite—called him "sir" as if he were an old man. The other

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at least had an eye for truth. There was something of relief in the knowledge that someone had an eye for it, that someone was aware of his state in regard to Paris. Before this no one had given any sign that they understood it—which was as it should be of course. He rejoined his rightful companions.

"Who was the beautiful gal?" one of them asked.

"Why—don't you know?" the other spoke before Josiah had a chance to. "That's Cy Enderby's daughter. Enderby got her a job in Joe's office—"

"Is he that broke?"

"He's almost down to his last yacht."

"What society girls will do for a thrill—"

"Better watch out, Joe—you'll get your picture in the rotogravure section of the papers—"

"Yes, you better watch yourself—"

Josiah didn't need his friends to advise him so. For a moment he might have been incautious, but now caution covered him like a cloak. "I doubt if I'm in any danger," he said, lying in his teeth.

"I never knew one of these society dames. What are they like, Joe?"

"I never noticed."

"You seemed to be noticing tonight!"

"Hardly—" Was it so plain—so suddenly plain? They were just being funny—that was all.

"Like hell you weren't!"

Just funny. . . . Well, let them have their fun. What was it the sober one of the two young men had said?—"Pay no attention—" At least these men, allegedly his friends, didn't call him "sir." "She's handy round

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the office and my regular secretary's on her vacation, so I didn't want anything to happen to her."

"Protect your property—that's right, Joe—always protect your property."

She wasn't his property. If she had been she certainly wouldn't have been sitting in a beer garden with two fellows, one of whom was drunk. But naturally, even so he didn't want anything to happen to her. Nothing was going to—not a damn thing—and there was nothing Josiah could do about it in any case. He'd offered his services and they'd been refused. The incident was closed. One of his present companions had a tendency to keep it open, pursuing the matter with a much too explicit statement as to what he himself would do if a girl such as Paris Enderby were working in his own office. The other man cut in:

"Well we've got control of the Board of Aldermen—that's something—"

It was a clumsy turning of the subject, like talk about the weather. Everyone knew they had control of the Board of Aldermen—at least these three knew it. Josiah was grateful but he wondered why the man had bothered. His secret, the weight of which had been so heavy it was almost more than he could carry, was evidently no longer his own burden.

"The Board of Estimate's what counts," said Josiah, "and we haven't got that yet."

"We will—give us time."

A, B, C, D, E, F, G. Two and two make four. Or did they? Just now all politics seemed as simple as these obvious statements of irrefutable fact—as obvious and as unimportant. Josiah had worked at politics for a

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long time. He was still working at them and expected to go on doing so, and yet they now seemed very far away. They were nothing with which he was at all essentially concerned.

"What do you think of this new charter they're talking about—the city charter?"

"It hasn't got a chance—"

"I hear Bob Carrington had something to do with it. Dangerous man—"

"I always thought he was—he's tricky—"

"Say, isn't he a close friend of Enderby's?"

"I believe he is, come to think of it."

Josiah cut in: "Roberto his name used to be. Immigrant stock. I don't like foreigners."

"You and me both! Well I suppose he couldn't help his rise. He's smart enough."

"Plenty smart! Think he'll get named for D.A.?"

"How should I know? Anything may happen."

"Anything will if he gets in. But not a chance—"

"No, not a chance. We're coming back and we're coming back plenty. We're mostly back now. Reform hits this town just once in so often but it never stays."

"You're repeating what the Big Fellow's told you. He thinks Carrington has a chance, not only to be named but to be elected."

"I'd hate to disagree with the Big Fellow, but district attorney of this city's a pretty important job. No one's going to let Carrington—"

"It would be a chilly day for the Big Fellow—"

"Damned chilly, and doesn't he know it? But reform never stays. It's the public. The public doesn't want it."

"What the public wants! They get what they think

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they want, and then they find out it's not what it's cracked up to be."

"You've said a mouthful—"

Josiah knew what he thought he wanted and nothing else mattered to him in the least. He looked at himself in amazement. In the crowd at the gates of the park he caught a flash of white. It might have been the white linen suit which was so in need of pressing. But it wasn't. It had nothing to do with Paris at all, save in his own yearning which had everything to do with her. He wondered if Paris knew Roberto Carrington or if the man's friendship with Cyrus was of the grade which didn't include the Enderby household. He hoped so—he sincerely hoped so—but again, there was nothing he could do about it.

"Good morning, Miss Enderby."

"Good morning, Mr. Madden."

Obviously, she had returned in safety, or—if there had been damage—it was not displayed. She was just the same as ever, entering the room in response to his ring, note book in hand. The white linen suit had been exchanged for more sober garb. They might have been back where they had been months ago. What right had Josiah to make even the most casual mention of the night before? He plunged into his work. He could do this, much as a person walks without thinking how they lift their feet. He gave his letters at a speed to have taxed even the redoubtable Finch, but the girl kept up with him. The only sign of trouble was a frowning concentration on her task. Finally there was a pause while Josiah

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sought about for something which he could reasonably present as further and necessary correspondence. He really had no more work for her that morning, but he couldn't let her go.

Suddenly Paris did an astounding thing. She threw her note book from her, skipping it or skimming it as you might toss a flat stone into a lake.

"Well?" she asked then.

"Well?" Josiah repeated.

"Why were you so mad last night?"

"Was I mad?"

"Of course you were! You had no need to be. Bill gets that way—a couple of drinks and he's off. We had no intention of letting him drive us back. Our mistake was bringing up the subject in advance. But you were livid."

"I'm very sorry. I realized afterwards it was none of my business."

"Oh it didn't matter. And I'm sorry for what he said. He wouldn't have said it if he'd been himself, of course."

"What did he say?"

"Oh if you don't remember let it pass!"

Josiah remembered perfectly. "Even if you are nuts about her—" That was what the young man had said. And Paris had told him not to be ridiculous. Did she really think he was being ridiculous, or the truth merely in itself awkward? Very awkward the truth was. It could hardly have been more so.

"The whole incident was regrettable, I'm afraid, but—well—those things happen sometimes."

"Yes, don't they?" Paris rose. She crossed over to the discarded note book and picked it up. "I didn't think it

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was so regrettable," she said. "In fact I thought it rather refreshing!"

"Oh did you? Why?"

"Yes, decidedly refreshing. I don't mind admitting I'm getting a trifle weary of being treated as though I were a combination of Nellie Finch and Queen Mary—"

What was she trying to do? Trying to devil him—just devil him—for the mere sport she might find in it?

"I don't know what other way you could be treated," Josiah said at last.

She was at the door and opening it. She turned: "Which ever way you slice it, it's the same old boloney!" Bang—the door closed, and she outside it.

Had it not been for Josiah junior, Josiah senior might not have understood the phrase. Many of his associates used a rough speech with which he was only too familiar, and he himself could not have been typed as a stickler for the academic. But this was schoolboy slang, he wouldn't—save for his child—have been apt to hear. As it was, he knew exactly what it meant. Paris was telling him—lightly, casually, but still she was telling him—that she knew quite well what other way she could be treated. She knew how he really felt, and had known it. "The same old boloney—" The pretense wearied her. She probably thought it funny, Josiah's Yankee caution. She was spoiled for caution by her own inherited impregnability. She was herself so impregnable she could sit in a beer garden with two of her pals without any thought of public comment. Hers was the carelessness of the immortals. Besides, what she did with her friends didn't greatly matter. But, as one of these had so

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bluntly pointed out, Josiah was not a friend. He was Joe Madden, the politician and—incidentally—Paris's boss. If all that were true he was right in his caution, as much for her sake as for his own. But why not be honest just for once? He pressed his buzzer and she came in again.

"Aren't you going to wait for Finch to fire me? She hired me, didn't she? Or did she? She'll be back from her vacation next week and it surely can wait till then."

"Why do you think anyone will fire you?"

"Someone will have to. You can't keep an employee who throws things about—is impertinent—tells you where to get off—"

"If I fired you it wouldn't be for any of those things—"

"What would it be for?"

"To preserve my own sanity—to sidestep the complications I know will follow if I don't. Tell me, how long have you known that your drunken friend was right?"

Paris faced him. "Not long—just since last night. Mostly you have a poker face. Last night it was off duty for a little while."

Josiah's question when it came was so quiet it could hardly be called speech: "And you?"

"You mean am I nuts about you too? You didn't think I'd be staying here if I wasn't, did you? Why—I wouldn't have come here in the first place otherwise. I saw you—oh it must have been a year ago—at a political meeting somewhere. I made a point of seeing you again just to be sure. Then I went to that business school. Then I kidded my father into speaking to you about

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me. I've thought once or twice that you were interested too. But last night I was sure of it. Even so, I had to bring the subject up. Wait for you to do it and I'd be waiting forever! And now you know. As soon as Finch comes back I'm firing myself. You're perfectly right about the whole thing and I'm wrong. I have a terrific talent for being wrong." She turned then and was out of the room again before Josiah could stop her.

But he didn't ring for her return. There was too much to think about.

11.

IN HIS mind finally, Josiah had everything arranged. But you can think of the lifting of a load and yet not be able to lift it with your hands. He loved Paris Enderby so much, and now in her own and forth-right way she had admitted the feeling to be reciprocal. You would have fancied this made everything simple, but it didn't. It was worse, not better. What were the two of them going to do about this love which was not on either side a love to be eased by the expected contact carefully arranged? Or perhaps it was just this, and all the rest was of the stuff of dreams—a thick vaporizing like heavy fog. It came between them, such a fog, one of so many barriers. If he could have married her, there would have been no problem—and in some ways it would have been a suitable match—as suitable as most—for her as well as for him. But Josiah was a married man. Flo would never release him. No use asking people to do things which you knew in advance they wouldn't do. Flo might have changed—and for the better—but you couldn't expect that in the watches of the night she would change as much as this. You must take only what you could get, and like it. Not ask for miracles—not reach for the moon.

A day and night had passed—only one—and yet to Josiah years had gone by when Paris again faced him.

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"Are you absolutely set in your determination to leave as soon as Finch comes back?"

No day and night—no years—his question merely an immediate reply to her announcement that she was firing herself.

"Why yes—" She spoke softly. Had she become meeker, milder, regretful of her day-old boldness? There was a hesitancy in her Josiah had never noted before. There was a hesitancy in himself, and her new guise gave him courage of which he was in sore need.

"You don't have to leave. Everything can go on here quite as usual."

"It would have to, wouldn't it? If it went on at all. I'm afraid I made a fool of myself."

"I hope you're not apologizing."

"Only to myself."

Her strong and beautiful hands lay in her lap, relaxed. He had never seen her so quiet before. But there was in her always an infinite variety. Even in the past Josiah had been aware of this, though seeing but the one side of her. Now she had turned.

"My own conduct needs much more explaining than yours," he said.

"Does it?"

"At least I would like the chance of explaining it—more fully." He hadn't explained anything as yet. "What the situation is—" He paused.

"I see—the situation—" She considered that.

The next move was obviously Josiah's. "I suppose you're living at home?" he asked finally.

"Yes, my father and I, during the week. Why?"

"I see—"

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"He's in Chicago just at the moment."

"Will he be gone long?"

"A day or so. Would you like to come for tea this afternoon?"

"I'll be there. What time?"

"Oh say about five. I could get away from here a little early perhaps."

"Perhaps—" Josiah's strain eased a little and he smiled.

Paris smiled back at him. "Don't worry—it won't become a habit!"

"You mean my coming to tea, or your leaving early, or both?"

"Possibly both, but for once I see nothing against it."

"Nothing," said Josiah. "It's very kind of you to let me come. But I think you are kind, as well as beautiful and clever and everything that a woman should be."

"I thought you said things could go on here quite as usual, and now you pay me compliments!"

He picked up some mail from his desk. As he looked at it he reassured her—"You don't have to worry about me. I move slow." Then he recalled that he didn't have to tell her this. From what she had said the day before she had already observed this trait in him.

Over the mail, which he had ceased to regard, her eyes met his. "Slow-moving people," she replied, "don't always deserve their reputation for being safe."

"Safe—safe as in a church—"

"What are you talking about?"

"Just something your father said to me once. I've often thought of it."

"He's rather a lamb."

Josiah doubted this. In fact, if Cyrus Enderby re-

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turned from Chicago unexpectedly and found Joe Madden having tea with Paris, that would take on Josiah's part even more explaining than he had planned. But Cyrus didn't—dramatic as the situation would then have become. As it was, there was nothing dramatic in the outward seeming, Josiah having been admitted by an elderly maid whose mental processes could not be in any way divined, and being now seated across a low table from Paris who was gravely pouring tea. She poured it from a very beautiful china pot which reminded him of the china which was one of the few items he had taken from his mother's house. While the maid was in the room they talked of the china and he told Paris of the resemblance.

"My grandfather was a seafaring man," he said. "He brought the stuff from Hong Kong."

"That is of course the way such treasure should be come by! I'm afraid my mother got this quite unromantically in an antique shop. She's quite a collector. Don't let her see your pieces or she'll wangle them away from you."

"Is she so determined?"

"Indeed she is! Though you wouldn't think so to look at her. At first glance she's disarmingly mild and small."

The entrance of Paris's mother upon the scene gave Josiah a certain pause. He had known she had a mother, but the person as an individual had remained outside his reckoning.

"Deliver me from small women," he said. "They're dynamite."

Paris laughed her lovely laugh. "Oh you've found that out?"

"Long ago. My own mother was a small woman."

Wasn't it pleasant, the two of them sitting here and talking about their mothers? The whole environment was so perfect for such a theme. There was an ease, an established graciousness, about the place which was never intrusive nor suing for an attention you didn't care at once to give it. Though you would have had to observe everything in it for a long time in order to see how good it was. The room was large, with great windows looking out over the river. Flo would have called it shabby and yet been impressed in spite of herself. It was as though people had lived here in a certain manner and without change for many years. Which must have taken considerable thought to achieve in effect, as the apartment house itself was reasonably modern. In addition to the windows there were French doors which opened to a terrace with a stone parapet breast high. It had to be high for any adequate protection as there were twenty floors to the street below. You could climb the parapet, of course, and leap. But this Josiah had no wish to do.

At the moment his life was very precious to him. There was only one count against him—time as the moments flew. He couldn't remain here forever, having been asked specifically for tea. The tea, once taken, would be like the sand run through an hour glass. He must get along with his explaining. They were alone now, or at least he hoped they were. It was a chance he must take, the maid would hardly be an eavesdropper. He gathered himself together.

"I want to outline for you my situation—"

"It will make interesting reading."

"Reading?" He looked at Paris, hoping she wasn't being funny at his expense. He liked her laughter when it was audible but this silent oblique banter was something he was never sure about. "I'm married," he plunged in.

"So I've heard."

"I have a boy eleven years old."

"I've heard that too—not the exact age, but the fact that you have one."

"I'm telling you this because otherwise I should do my level best to get you to marry me. What I want more than anything else is the rest of our lives together—unsuited in some ways as we may seem. It's not for me just a—just a—"

"I know what you mean," said Paris. "It's not just an ordinary yen—the usual attempt to get something for nothing."

Her frankness might have seemed excessive, but he matched it. "Not that I wouldn't take anything I could get," he said. There was a slight pause she made no attempt to break. He continued finally: "Don't think I'm trying to force that issue. It makes it hard, as the very last wish I have is to bring on you any disgrace or embarrassment or a situation which would be painful. Any scandal—which there might easily be if we were seen together too often—"

She cut him off. "That would be bad for you too."

"Yes, it would. But I'd be inclined to take a chance on it for myself—I mean if I had only myself to consider—"

"You have your family. Your wife—your boy—"

"I didn't mean them—I meant you."

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"You might wreck your career—"

"Yes," said Josiah, "I suppose I might. I've never thought so little of my career as I'm thinking now!"

"I couldn't accept the sacrifice," Paris answered him. "It wouldn't be worth it."

She sat there in a sort of brooding—almost sorrowing—silence. The laughter and the banter were all gone. She was so grave, having taken on gravity as easily as she did any of her many moods. She was the most remarkable woman Josiah had ever encountered. He hadn't known there could be such women. He wasn't sure exactly what she meant—whether it wouldn't be worth it to her own conscience to ruin what he had so far achieved, or whether perhaps if he were injured past repair he would cease to be to her worth the bother. He waited, and in her own good time, she elucidated a little further:

"To you your success is perfectly natural. It's one with you, like breathing. It must always have been so. Without it you wouldn't be the same at all. I couldn't take it from you or be a party to anything which might. Besides, if I did, or if I were, you'd never forgive me—no matter what you may think now."

He thought suddenly of how he'd never forgiven Flo, not for taking his success—this she hadn't quite accomplished—but for tripping it with obstacles. Paris was still speaking: "In a way you have a very good opinion of yourself and to do anything which would injure it would be bad. In a way, of course, you haven't—"

He didn't follow this—"How do you mean, in a way I haven't?"

Through the gravity a smile came. "As a pursuer of the fair sex you're quite modest about yourself—quite."

"How do you know all this? I don't mean only about me, but about everything. You're so young."

"I started young, I guess. I was married at eighteen."

Josiah thought he had misunderstood the word. "Married, did you say—*married*?"

"Yes—married. I didn't think you knew. Few people do."

Josiah had never been so startled. "Where's your husband?"

"I haven't the vaguest notion! The marriage was annulled. My family didn't like it much, and I didn't either when I'd thought about it. I was abroad at the time. I had been to school in Switzerland. It was all arranged very simply. I went to college. I made rather an elaborate debut. It seemed the best way, to have everything go on as though nothing had happened. And yet things couldn't really go on like that. I suppose it's why I've never married since. My husband was a guide—a mountain climber—you know, took tourists up the Alps. I've never been really interested in any other man until I saw you. All that happened eight years ago. I'm twenty-six now."

"And you've led in all those years a—" Josiah stopped his question short. What was he asking? What business was it of his?

Paris herself was less concerned. "Oh no," she said, "not completely a celibate existence. There have been one or two minor occasions. But they didn't last. They didn't mean anything."

Josiah didn't understand it wholly—certainly not at

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once. She looked so young, so virginal. And she spoke so casually of matters of which virginal women do not speak. She was a creature outside his own experience altogether. Yet he would have been less than honest with himself had he not taken in the fact that what she had divulged made all the difference. In a way he wished she hadn't told him.

"You put me in something of a spot," he said, thinking aloud.

"I know. I ought to have let you play your hand as you had originally planned it."

"It's not a game!"

"I know it isn't."

"I don't want to be one of those minor occasions of which you spoke—one of those that didn't last. I may be modest but I'm not that modest."

"Whoever said you were?" Paris asked him, not committing herself as to whether he was to be any occasion whatsoever.

Again it wasn't easier, but harder—worse, not better. Play his hand as he had originally planned it? How could he play it that way? But it was not a game. Paris knew it was not—or at least had said she knew it. What was Josiah supposed to do now? She had said he was modest as a pursuer of the fair sex—modest about himself. Was he to continue for the rest of his days living up to this verdict, looking at her as though he were a hungry boy examining the display of pastry on the other side of a plate glass window? He had told her he would take what he could get.

With an ordinary woman that wouldn't have been so difficult, but with Paris—as things were—any suggestion in such direction would seem as though he would not

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have made it, and had not had it in his mind to make it, before he had known this past history which she had recounted quite as if it were unimportant. Perhaps it was unimportant—which was why it had marked her so little. Would she be marked if she were to be taken to some quiet haven of seduction, such as Max's place perhaps? If he ever changed his mind, Max had told Josiah—"It's private you know—it would be nobody's business—" And he had thought Max's offer funny—and then not so funny, and had tried with imperfect success to close his thought to the vista of it. Complete and utter privacy had a secondary reason. Their being seen together would excite remark, while if they were not seen . . .

Josiah looked at her, not merely for the pleasure the sight of her always gave him but for the realization that she was no more suited to Max's place than she ever had been. And yet it ought to have been so simple now for him to suggest that she come there! It wasn't simple at all, but where else was there? He rose, feeling an embarrassment which verged on the ridiculous.

"You're really very sweet," Paris announced unexpectedly.

No one—certainly not since his infancy—had ever called Josiah sweet before.

Time he could play for: "You said this morning that you could see nothing against my coming here once for tea. I can see nothing against your coming out with me to dinner—once."

"In the biggest most conspicuous place in town—where we certainly would never go if there was any reason why we shouldn't be seen?"

The strain eased again. "That's outguessing 'em!"

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"Isn't it just? I'll get my hat."

What a woman she was! Josiah might have kissed her then on the strength of the wonder he felt at her—surely not as a sealing of pact, when no pact had been drawn. But she crossed over and pressed a bell. Waiting for the summons to be answered brought no time for kissing. The maid whose mental processes were undividable, came in.

"You can take the tea, Katherine. And tell Cook I shall be out to dinner. If anyone phones, I'll be back about nine—or ten."

This put a deadline on proceedings. But Paris Enderby would hardly leave her house in Josiah's company for a period more indeterminate. He waited while she got her hat. The maid attended to the gathering of the tea things, ignoring his presence almost as though he were one of the chairs in their chintz coverings. Perhaps in this strange household she had seen sights more worthy of her notice. And then the room was filled with light again, and Paris in a broad black hat. . . . Most big hats made women look like mushrooms. But she was tall enough to carry it.

Paris didn't mind Max's place at all, and Josiah was always regretting the need of its use. Though he knew there would never be any trouble with Max. He wasn't the sort with whom a man like Josiah ever had any trouble. Besides, he had survived as long as he had, and flourished, by minding his own business. He had learned his lack of inquisitiveness in a number of places where one too many questions might be the last the questioner

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would ever ask. He was perfectly aware that Josiah wanted the place in order to bring a woman there. And he accepted this with almost as much grace as Paris accepted it herself. She didn't worry about Max. She knew him by sight, as he came sometimes to the office, and it seemed to amuse her rather than otherwise to know so much of him which he was unaware she knew. She played his ribald records. Her finger prints must have been all over the doors which screened the kitchenette. She drew the line at wearing the blue silk negligee just as Josiah had known she would.

What Nellie Finch thought about Paris no one knew. She probably didn't think anything—anything new or startling. She would have had no way of such thinking save through psychic powers. In any case she would never say. Besides, Paris had an easy skill in never tipping her hand nor giving any sign where it could possibly be observed that anything untowards had intruded into the sacred fastness of city politics. She was like a juggler who could juggle several separate articles at once, none of them falling or breaking or touching. And she would have cut off the finger which matched Josiah's own lost one—her finger with the Egyptian scarab ring on it—rather than have done him harm.

There was between them a very close and comprehensive union, far transcending in its character anything it might have been called. They had been right in their instant estimate of it, and at the first flush of their passion they might so easily have been wrong. They were never uneasy in each other's company, nor with moments of puzzlement as to why they had come together. They shared a strange list of qualities. Both had a degree of

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unscrupulousness—an egotism—an impatience. Both were competent and strong. And a little lonely too, or had been up to now. Paris could be gay with a gayety Josiah could never achieve. Her surface sympathies were more readily engaged than his, though he had a sense of bounden duty in some matters which she was without. Many of their differences stemmed from differences in background and environment. Paris had been in a good many places both in flesh and spirit where Josiah never had been. She had been exposed to a system, educational and social, to which he had never been exposed. He learned from her a great deal. The range of his attention being by nature narrow, his concern with Paris Enderby broadened it considerably, and—coming through her—the process was comparatively painless.

She had no great and philosophical brain—no notable omniscience—it wasn't that. But nevertheless he learned. Not as much as he might have done if he'd been twenty instead of forty and less hardened in the mold of habit. But there was so much to talk about. Josiah could talk to her more freely than he had ever talked to anyone—even to his old friend Cohen the dentist. It was a new world to which Paris introduced Josiah—a world from which he seemed to gather strength to wrestle with the old one. And wasn't she there with him in the old one too, close to his side, supporting his upraised arm? It was a pity that among the multitude of problems they discussed there could not be a plan for marriage. But both knew there could be no such plan and wasted few tears. They looked at neither marriage nor the future. To Josiah it was not the least of Paris's many virtues that she accepted the necessities of living. She never

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quibbled nor made obstacles. She could agree or disagree—which last she often did. But the measure of their love could be taken from the ease with which such disagreements could be ignored.

She had a mercurial quality and could turn all at once from sense to nonsense. There was the matter of Max's pictures—a series of bright indiscretions which were hung at neat intervals upon his walls. Max had graduated from the period when he had clipped his art from the less discriminating magazines. These were glassed and framed.

"Etchings, my God!" said Paris, looking at them.

"They're not etchings—" Josiah knew that much about pictures.

Paris had evidently not heard the denial. "Etchings. . . . Think of the poor unsuspecting babies who have been brought to see them!" She did a startlingly good imitation of one of these repulsing the unwelcome advances of the fawnlike Max. It was as good as going to a revue.

Oddly enough Max's taste in furnishing bothered Josiah rather more than it did Paris. This was at first. This was before he had grown used to the idea of her being there. Gradually it didn't matter where she was. She seemed to provide a sort of veil which covered everything. And finally, to a Josiah utterly bemused, this tawdry, ugly place of Max's became for him the garden spot on earth. It was Eden and the gates of heaven and the haven of all things lovely. He told Paris, and meant it—"You know, to me this is the most beautiful room I've ever seen!"

She took the estimate as it was meant, and didn't argue.

12.

FEDERALLY the Democrats were going up. In the city they were going down. Connected with city politics as he was, Josiah became more and more aware that he had picked the wrong horse. But there wasn't much he could do about it now. Besides, had he picked the other one he himself might not now be in any place comparable to where he was. He thought of that. He was a big shot—a good deal bigger than Tom Duffy was, who seemed more tired than ever as time went on. Duffy was a sick man, really, walking about but sick and taking longer and longer vacations which, if the truth were known, were rest cures in the charge of doctors. But it was still found convenient to leave him undisturbed in his title of boss, to have Josiah do his work. Josiah made a good share of the money to be made and took care of the little fellows, and the big ones too, for the matter of that. Men such as Cyrus Enderby were the recipients of Josiah's favors. And yet he knew in the innermost reaches of his knowledge that he seemed more important than he was.

He was let alone—even the real boss, the Big Fellow of all, let him alone a good deal, didn't have the orders coming in too fast. Josiah's judgment was considered pretty good and he was orderly and practical and respectable. Beyond all else he was careful. Why

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shouldn't he be, digging himself as he was into a position so many men envied? It was Bob Carrington who put a tag on him. He heard it from Paris. "Joe Madden is the Organization's false front," Carrington said of him. And then—this also by way of Paris—"He wasn't around much during the first spring house-cleaning so he escaped the broom. Better luck next time." Bob Carrington was a little too smart for his own good.

Yet you couldn't dismiss Carrington with a phrase, even in rebuttal. The Republicans nominated him for district attorney and he had a very good chance of getting elected. They wouldn't have nominated him otherwise, not unless the character of the man had compelled them to fall in line. If he got in, his term in office would make any previous city investigations look like inquiries into the safety of a chicken run! He would use the scrub brush instead of the whitewash brush, and yet he didn't believe in Santa Claus anymore than Josiah did. He was so damnably honest—that was his emblem, his banner. And he knew the little tricks and used them. Paris was a bit too free, to Josiah's taste, in admitting that he was the most extraordinary man she knew.

"You feel," she said of him, "that he could lick his own weight in wild cats, and yet he's so tremendously occupied with things of the mind. His fighting spirit merely supports his mind as a pedestal does a statue."

"A man needs a fighting spirit in this business," Josiah replied. "I outguessed him once. Did he tell you?"

"Oh, when you had the photograph taken shaking hands? Yes, he told me. I think he's never quite forgiven you. Though he says a lot of people thought you had more to do with his defeat than you really had."

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"Yes, that was one of my lucky breaks. But I didn't think he'd give me credit. He was running for mayor and got beaten. It doesn't hurt a man to do that once in a while. The same thing happened to me. If it hadn't been for that I'd have been a small town politician all my life."

"And why did it happen to you?" Paris asked.

"Oh, it was just one of those things! I guess the voters didn't want me—not for mayor anyway." The real reason for his defeat, the reputation of his wife, was a subject he never discussed with Paris—the only taboo, possibly, which existed, at least on his part, between them. "What does Carrington know about me besides that?" he asked.

"Nothing of course—not in the sense you mean. Of course he can't understand why I should be working for you instead of for him. He hands it to you."

"Well that's white of him!" Josiah had it in his mind to say, but didn't, that Carrington would have handed it to him all the more had he known the real truth about himself and Paris. He had a way of regarding other men as always potentially envious of him in that regard. He was so proud of Paris, and the natural outlet for pride was being able to boast a little, and of course he couldn't. In a way this was too bad, because there were times when he felt that Paris was the only thing he had to boast about.

It was perfectly true, what Carrington had said. Josiah was the Organization's false front, and he didn't like it. He had learned a good deal in recent years, and the more he learned the smaller his own stature had shrunk in his own eyes. It was a disillusionment setting in—

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something of which he would never have suspected himself of being capable. He had always thought of himself as being to start with so totally disillusioned. But then he was always looking back and discovering the gaps in his past knowledge and the way his thought inflated it. Carrington must have known from the beginning so many things Josiah was just learning. What beginning? For such knowledge, no source coming later than your mother's milk would be soon enough. Carrington hadn't picked the wrong horse—not he.

And he wasn't content to let it go at that. To him the whole world was like his own back yard. He lumped it together with his own country—if you could say that such a man had a country, being half Italian as he was, and half English. He was much concerned with world conditions—the failure of the League of Nations—the spread of war—the Italians in Ethiopia—the rise of Fascism and Nazism in all of Europe and the danger to ourselves therein. The danger, he said, was very great. We couldn't here divorce ourselves from the state of the world. World conditions—conditions here were much the same—but you couldn't see them yet—not clearly—you had to dig for them beneath the ground—dig out the roots. In Europe these roots had grown and flourished and were spreading. Carrington talked about such matters on the radio and in the papers and to anyone who would listen to him. He had always been a great one for talk, and it was natural he wouldn't be afraid of foreign entanglements or regard them as foreign. Here for the most part, so he said, the men who ruled ignored—or pretended to ignore—the keg of dynamite on which they were gracefully reclining. What

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did Carrington mean by the men who ruled? This was a democracy. The people ruled. So why worry?

Of course the people ruled! Josiah liked the people. Wasn't he himself one of them? And people had to think of themselves in their own terms. There was Josiah's own advantage to be considered—his own case. Why worry? But in certain ways, and quite recently, Josiah had learned a little too much not to worry. There was his own case and there was the case of Flo. Since he had through the inner councils of his party been given access to a rather seamy side of life, his attitude towards Flo had changed somewhat. He never spoke of the change, even to her. But he had rescued her—there were many women who had not been rescued—women such as Flo once had been—and the fact of this constituted more and more one of the two holds Flo had on him, the other one of course being the boy. He had rescued her and he was therefore responsible for her life. One tie he might have broken, though even this would have been, he knew, one of the most difficult undertakings he had ever managed, but the boy—plus the rescue—formed a situation from which he could never ease himself no matter how untenable it had become.

It was funny how things happened. If he hadn't blundered into marrying Flo she might have come to an appalling end—and soon. But he had married her, and she was doing all right for herself. In fact he was often surprised at how well she'd done, because she didn't have anything which even he would call a brain. But she'd kept out of trouble and there were women in her present position—and without her gory past—who made fools of themselves, got mixed up with things, were the

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objects of blackmail, were found some fine morning in some hotel room not breathing any more. And all just because they didn't have enough to do with their time, and were bored, and didn't have sense enough to accept the boredom as the work they did for security. In a way he handed it to Flo, with something the same patronizing gesture with which Carrington handed it to him—a credit given, mixed with an element of surprise at the credit's being due.

A man like Carrington didn't know how lucky he was to be unencumbered, though at that Josiah wouldn't have bet on his not knowing anything there was to know. His range of knowledge was a part of his peculiar genius, his extraordinary and useful honesty. He was anything but a typical Republican. The Republicans took him to their bosoms because they had to. Well, the Democrats had taken Josiah for much the same reason, because they couldn't find anyone else so suited to their purpose. Though Carrington wasn't any false front! In fact, it must have been at moments a little the other way about. Carrington was a fighter. So was Josiah—or had been once.

But now he mustn't fight except in little ways, and—particularly in little ways—he must hold himself in readiness to do as he was told. Being a politician wasn't exactly a bed of roses—which might have been why Tom Duffy had grown to be so tired. But Duffy was older than Josiah was, and he'd been at it longer. Besides, he didn't have Josiah's proven ability to take punishment. Josiah could, as would have been said of him in the prize-ring, "roll with the punch"—which meant to take a blow going away instead of coming in. But to

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do that successfully you had to know where you were rolling, and Josiah wasn't always sure now. Perhaps he wasn't rolling anywhere.

A realization of his plight, which so many men wouldn't have called a plight at all, didn't come at once or at any one time but was pieced together bit by bit. And there were still plenty of times when he was snared by the fact of his own power. Those were the times to watch out for, he knew enough to know. He held his place tenuously and by favor and he learned the while. He wasn't like Carrington who knew everything without learning, who had obtained even a law degree while shaving, doubtless—or before he had need of shaving.

Carrington won the election for the office of district attorney. Josiah, looking into an as yet uncharted future, could see the man in his bearded age, seated upon the bench of the Supreme Court. Oh not the one here, the one in Washington, the big one. Wasn't that the high objective of all lawyers?

"You hate him, don't you?" Paris asked.

"No, why should I? There's room for us both. There's nothing he can do to me—not even if he starts cleaning up the city till it looks like an ad in a woman's magazine! I'm as honest as a June morning."

"You better be," said Paris.

"My conduct is an open book—"

"With some of the pages glued together?"

"Just one page," Josiah answered, "And that's the kind of thing I hardly think he'd look for."

"No, it's not his line. Of course, we might ask him over some evening—just to make sure—"

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Josiah made a pretense of taking the suggestion seriously: "How about Thursday?"

"Perhaps Max wouldn't like it. After all, it's Max's place—we can't go scattering invitations around without a by your leave!"

"Well it won't be Max's place much longer," Josiah said.

"What do you mean?"

"I've pretty well decided to take it over. Oh not officially. The lease will remain in his name. But I'll pay his rent elsewhere and see he has a duplication of everything. Max always gives me his key, but I know damn' well he has another one. It's much too easy for him to check on every time we come here. If I have the lock changed and take the whole thing over I'll feel easier in my mind."

"I suppose you're right—"

"I know I am."

"It's a little like closing the barn door after the horse is stolen, but I see your point."

"I didn't intend to speak of it—thought it might put ideas into your head—ideas that I was worrying or had cause to. It isn't that, but why take chances you don't have to take? Why stick your neck out?"

There was no answer to this and Paris made none. She kissed her lover very gently, as you might kiss a child. She had once told him that he was sweet. Was it because he was sweet that there was a limit to the trust he reposed in Max Keg? There was one thing Paris didn't know about Josiah. He liked to have things legal—or as legal as possible. Crime or any approach to it made him uneasy. If it hadn't, he might have gone on

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with his bootlegging instead of getting out of it when the getting was still good.

There were so many parts to living. At least there seemed to be for Josiah. He was torn in so many directions at once. He felt like a creature—or creatures—of multiple birth, all connected freakishly by strong inseverable tissue. He went from one to another with the ease with which you might move in a state not governed by physical or gravitational laws. The connection lay in his own consciousness, the material and memory of his own brain. And yet he inhabited each division of himself not at will exactly but because he must, and because these parts of his own being—inseverable as they were—were yet so damnably at odds.

Even his work was no longer a labor simple and cohesive. He had once thought he understood politics. He was familiar enough with that shallower depths in which he had been so eager to wet his feet. But in those earlier days there were depths he had not fathomed. Politics—city politics—were very much like certain fraternal orders. You were given full membership degree by degree until, only at the last, you received your final initiation. You might feel uneasy then but the door which opened out was closed. You knew too much. And it was what you had wanted—worked for and sweated through the night in order to get. Or was it?

Josiah had a proper scorn for people who got what they wanted and then changed their minds. But it didn't really happen just that way. The goal either had the wrong label or a label too much blurred for easy reading.

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And Josiah had discarded so many things which were labeled clear, definite tax which he
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a false front—window dressing—whatever you cared to name it—part of the recent whitewashing which had seemed at the time so thorough—part of the brush-wielding. He was purposely thrust into a light less glaring but quite as strong as the light which beat on a more official candidate, a more legitimate office—thrust there to save the man behind him and above him, the Big Fellow from whom he took his orders. Bob Carrington was District Attorney now, and the Big Fellow had known somehow that he would be, and the Big Fellow was afraid of Carrington. Always Carrington. . . . My God, if Josiah ever came into any real power he'd do something with it—something constructive! He'd beat Carrington at his own game.

Josiah didn't have any real power, and he wanted it. When he had it everything would be different. Meanwhile he was well aware on which side his bread was buttered. And any failure now would be fatal—any misstep—any inquisitiveness which might be thought undue. Old Henry Vliet had warned Josiah about inquisitiveness the first time they had met. But the depths wouldn't seem so deep if he himself could take the soundings, still walking cautiously as was his habit. As things were he was torn—and bleeding and in pieces. And the pieces were all joined together by this entity which was himself. By the standards by which he lived Josiah had so very little on his conscience. He had no actual contact with the crime he hated. He wasn't supposed to. He was no go-between. He did no travelling in bullet-proof cars, knock five times and ring bells in a certain manner in order to be admitted. Neither did the Big Fellow. The Big Fellow functioned obscurely

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but not in that sort of obscurity. And some day the Big Fellow planned to get control of the entire city government. Meanwhile he made money any way he could and salted it away and spent it where it would do him the most good. He couldn't resist the temptation of the money. Its source was unimportant.

Maybe the Big Fellow hated crime as much as Josiah hated it. Maybe Tom Duffy did and the other members of the council—the inner council that took its orders without too much question and knew a little more than it was comfortable for any men to know. In any case, the underworld was very useful on Election Day and you could hardly afford to forget it in between. The underworld was all right in its place. You could be genial with it without being involved. And yet Josiah had noted no great weeping when any of its members met an almost certain fate.

No great weeping. . . . Josiah recalled that he himself hadn't felt any undue sorrow on that night when Tony Genarro had been shot. He had been on his way out of town and the shooting hadn't altered his plans. After all Genarro had never exactly been a friend of his. But Perley had died that same night—or towards morning—and Perley was a friend, or had been. And Perley's death hadn't changed Josiah's plans either. In fact Josiah had been just a little relieved. The two deaths had wiped the slate so very clean.

He remembered that night—he would always remember it—when Perley lay dying and accused him of having suggested to Genarro that he—Perley—make the stuff they sold. This had been the immediate trouble—the immediate cause of the shooting. And Josiah had

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denied to Perley that he had suggested any such thing. But anyone lies to a dying man, if only to ease his pain! No, Josiah was not in a position to criticize the Big Fellow or any of the Big Fellow's supporters. There was something in the Bible about that—about beholding the mote that is in thy brother's eye but perceiving not the beam in thine own. . . . Josiah's own discernment in this regard was getting even a little too retroactive for comfort! Oh the underworld was all right—in its place. Even though Bob Carrington seemed to be the only man who could keep it there. What had all the men who were afraid of Carrington been doing on the day when the majority for him had rolled up?

"The country isn't all like this," Josiah told Paris. "It's a great country. But it has spots and canker sores which have to be cut out. It shows how great it is, that it gets along in spite of them—in spite of the graft and the crooks and the crooked politicians—oh I know you think I'm one—"

It wasn't only what Paris thought that troubled Josiah. It went farther than this into an odd abstract troubling—some queer Yankee soul-searching all his own.

Clever as she was, there were things Paris didn't understand. She accused Josiah of being almost wholly occupied with being careful. She didn't have to be careful, protected as she was on every side. Women of the class represented by Paris Enderby could do anything they pleased and get away with it. They took so much for granted. They never had to worry about the rent

or the meals. They worked or took orders merely as a sort of game, and if they did it well it was because they played all games well. There was no stress about it—no strain—merely an easy and casual skill which would have deceived the uninitiated. They would take infinite pains, of course, to get what they went after. Look at the planning that Paris had done because Josiah Madden had taken her fancy! She had been the pursuer and she confessed it readily. Safe as in a church. She hadn't worried too much about her own safety. Women such as Paris never needed to be rescued, except sometimes—almost automatically—by their families. That early error—that guide she'd married—there was her family with money and influence right on the nail to get her out as good as new!

They had paid the fellow quite a sum, so Josiah learned, and he'd set himself up in a small hotel on the side of a mountain. His looks—the man was obviously exceedingly personable—would be useful in the hotel business and in dealing with lady tourists. Maybe by now he had the habit of marriage and of being bought off for a price. He'd kept his part of the bargain well enough and never bothered Paris since. If she ever should have need of police protection concerning him, that was one time the police would be allowed to function in their full capacity. The laws were all rigged in her favor. Josiah hoped they always would be, of course, but her being so sure of her own omnipotence irritated him sometimes—just a little. She had a stubborn streak. She'd get an idea in her lovely head and nothing Josiah could say could get it out. One of the most persistent of these was her desire to see Josiah's boy.

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"You could have him come to the office sometime—"

"Alone?"

"Naturally alone!" Her desire to behold Josiah's family didn't extend to Flo.

Josiah had talked to her about him a good deal and shown her photographs. He had thought this would assuage her curiosity. Evidently it didn't. "I'll see," he said.

"What harm could there be? I won't say anything."

"It's what he might say afterwards."

"What could he say. A man is permitted to have secretaries, isn't he? Well I'm one of them!" She was almost cross about it, and she was rarely cross.

She dropped the subject then, but she hadn't forgotten it. Josiah couldn't have anything like that between them, so finally—and against his better judgment—he gave in. He had known he would, sooner or later. He cautioned Paris not to pay the young Josiah any undue attention, which she didn't, merely coming in for a moment on her way out to lunch, picking up some letters and leaving on the desk some others for Josiah senior to sign.

"Miss Enderby, this is my boy—" The father spoke quite casually and Paris smiled and gave the boy her hand and a rather long look.

"How do you do?"

The look was returned. "How do you do?"

There was nothing more. It would have been pleasant to ask her to join them at the noon meal Josiah had promised his son—the noon meal at the big hotel. But doing this would be courting comment.

That night at home at dinner the axe fell.

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"Dad has an awfully funny secretary—"

"Miss Finch is a very able woman," Josiah announced quickly. That might do it.

"Yes, I know she is," said Flo. She turned to the boy. "Really, Josie, she can't help being funny—funny looking I suppose you mean?" Flo always called the boy "Josie," as if he were a girl.

"Yes," Josiah agreed, "and it's lucky for me she looks just as she does. If she were pretty she'd likely be married and not working for me at all."

"How true that is," said Flo. She had always been rather smug about Nellie Finch's not being pretty. You heard such wild tales of men who were in love with their secretaries and it was nice to know that in such direction there was nothing to fear.

The boy now spoke in a tone showing utter disgust at the stupidity of adults. "I don't happen to be talking about Miss Finch!"

"Oh," said Flo. "You mean someone at Daddy's insurance office? I thought you met him at his other office today—"

"So I did."

"Who does he mean?" Flo asked Josiah, "Someone new?"

"I think he means Miss Enderby." No use pretending a bewilderment which wouldn't hold water. Be natural—have nothing to conceal.

"That's her name! She's not funny looking at all, but funny to be a secretary. You'd never know she was one."

"Are secretaries so different from other people that you can spot them a mile off?"

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"Generally." This with an air of infinite wisdom.

"What's so striking about this young woman that Josie noticed her so much?" There was a shade of suspicion in Flo's voice.

"Nothing, except that she's a rather typical society girl. Her father, Cyrus Enderby, asked me to give her a job, and I was glad, as it happened, to do him the favor."

Flo's astonishment was clear. "You mean you have the daughter of Cyrus Enderby working in your office?"

"Yes. What's so remarkable—"

Flo cut him off— "Why the Enderbys are millionaires!"

"I believe so—at least they were a few years back."

"What would Miss Enderby be wanting a job for? Taking work away from people who need it—just a fad with society girls! They come out—"

"Come out?" the two Josiahs asked.

"Make a debut. Then after a year or so, if they don't marry they think they'll try business. They certainly don't know when they're well off!"

"I guess you're right at that," Josiah said. "I didn't want her particularly, but I had no choice. She's quite competent."

"She had on a very special coat," the boy announced. "I noticed it was special because the material was the same that Mother was looking at yesterday at the tailor's shop. The man told Mother a coat like it would cost two hundred dollars, made up, and Mother said it was so plain it wasn't worth it. But on her it looked sort of nice."

Josiah had a talking point now for which he was

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duly grateful. "What are you trying to do, Flo? Bring the boy up to be a ladies' tailor?"

"He just happened to be with me. I had some shopping for him besides." Flo pondered for a bit and Josiah was immensely relieved at what the pondering finally brought forth. "Wearing a two hundred dollar coat to work—who ever heard of such a thing—"

Josiah couldn't resist defending Paris. "She probably didn't think anything about it—Paris Enderby doesn't pay much attention to clothes usually."

Again, Flo was startled. "*Paris* Enderby—is that the one—*the* Paris Enderby?"

"What do you mean, *the* Paris Enderby?" How many Paris Enderbys were there, Josiah wondered. "Why do you ask?"

"Why? I forget, you never read the society news. A few years ago Paris Enderby was considered to be the most beautiful girl in town."

"She was? What do you know? And when Miss Finch is busy she's been taking my letters."

"I guess the boy notices things more than you do."

"I guess he does."

Flo helped herself to a small pat of butter. "Is she as beautiful as she is supposed to be?"

"You're not allowed to eat butter at dinner, Mother—"

"I know I'm not, Josie, but one piece won't hurt me. I heard the other day it wasn't so much what you ate as how much." She returned to the main theme. "It might be one of those sort of built-up reputations—"

"It might," said Josiah. "I wouldn't call her a beauty, exactly. Too tall for my taste—tall and thin—"

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"The lucky bum! She probably doesn't ever have to think of diet at all."

"I presume not. I recall now—one or two of the other men have remarked on her looks, but I'm afraid I never paid much attention."

"You never do," said Flo, "that's one thing." And then to her son—"Don't let me forget to get you those shoes in the morning, Josie. When you start school again Monday there won't be much time."

"Yes, Mother—"

Josiah junior didn't need school really. He was quite bright enough as it was. However, the danger had been skirted very successfully. If you knew enough politicians it was said you could fix anything. And Josiah's being himself a politician made this go double. But he could have wished the subject had never come up. Flo would always remember now that Paris Enderby worked in his office—the Paris Enderby. To Flo the society page ranked a trifle higher than Shakespeare or the Bible. It was an abstract ranking. She cherished but little hope of being listed there herself.

For the instant she was intent upon something else—"I couldn't wear a coat like that anyway. It's not my type."

"No," Josiah agreed rather absently. He didn't recall the coat in question with any degree of accuracy but he was sure Flo was right. He looked at his watch. "I'm late—I have an appointment at eight o'clock—"

His own house choked him a little. He was always relieved to get away from it.

13.

THERE was a crying baby and a child with a grimy face eating an orange, and the view from the train window wasn't particularly prepossessing. The reason why Josiah hadn't used his car instead of subjecting himself to these minor discomforts became—even to himself—increasingly obscure. Oh well, it would be over soon—at least this stage of his journey would be over. At the station he would get a taxi and then—soon after that—he would know why he had been sent for. He had thought himself through with the Big Fellow but evidently he had been wrong. Carrington was through with him of course. Carrington had done his duty with a vengeance—literally with a vengeance. And what had Carrington against the man except that he was a sort of glorified crook, and Carrington received a salary from the government to prosecute crooks? It was something of a joke on Carrington that when the Big Fellow sent for you you still obeyed the summons. It might be inconvenient, uncomfortable and—under the circumstances—a little surprising, but you did what the Big Fellow said. Such was his power and his hold, which even Carrington couldn't break.

This was one of the rare occasions when Josiah envied people who smoked. The air of the smoking car—which vehicle he had tried and discarded—wouldn't annoy

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him then, and a cigar or perhaps a cigarette might have calmed his nerves. He wondered if he whom he was on his way to see still had his self-imposed allowance of three cigars a day? Undoubtedly he did. Trust the Big Fellow to have everything as comfortable as possible! He hadn't made this trip by train but in a big smooth car piloted by a competent city chauffeur, and accompanied by courteous and apologetic city employees. Regular holiday jaunt, Josiah heard it had been like. The best was none too good for some people no matter what had been legally proved against them!

As might have been expected, the room where Josiah finally waited wasn't such a bad place save for the bars on the windows. He'd always been a little curious about the inside of a prison. He had never been in one before. He'd visited local jails occasionally in the course of his labors but never a place like this—one of the greatest in the whole country. He hadn't seen the Big Fellow in jail, as during the trial the object of his present visit had been out on bail all the time. Josiah had the necessary authorizations all in order and experienced no difficulty in entering. Everyone was very polite and efficient and treated him as an important caller on an important resident ought to be treated. It seemed no day passed when you didn't learn something. What had he had in his mind to find anyway? Rats scuttling about and a pallet of straw and chains? And an inmate starved and matted and garbed in prison stripes? Any approach to such a scene would have embarrassed Josiah immeasurably—an embarrassment he was to be spared.

When the boss finally arrived, under suitable escort, he was wearing his own permitted haberdashery. He

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was clean and shaved and looking in pretty good shape, everything considered. What was wrong was not on the surface at all. It lay far beneath the cheerful smile and the warm handclasp and the chin held rather consciously high. It was something in the eyes, like the eyes of a man who had been out of a job for a long time and wasn't too sure of getting another one—not licked exactly, but the expression might have showed this in anyone else but in this man who always had guts rather notably. A man didn't get where he had without guts—not where he was now, but where he'd been.

"Well Joe—"

"Well—"

"How's every little thing with you?"

"I can't complain—"

"Neither can I—neither can I. The first hundred years are the hardest. And just when I get shaken down into the routine here I'll be out. But I've learned a lot of things."

"Such as—" Josiah wouldn't have made this query if the guard hadn't stepped outside the door. The talk was evidently going to be private and not conducted in any way as the less privileged among the convicts were supposed to receive their friends.

"I've learned the value of ten dollars for one thing."

"How so?"

"Yes, I'm allowed to put ten dollars a week into the kitty—which makes all the difference. It means I can have my own food and tobacco. A mere humble ten spot—think of it!"

"Chicken feed," said Josiah. "But that's fine. I was just wondering about your cigars."

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"Oh I can send for those outside. I do quite a bit of reading too—something I've never had much time for—but now, as I work in the library for several hours every day—"

"That's fine," Josiah cut in, repeating himself because he didn't know what else to say.

There was certainly nothing that the strictest prison censorship could have objected to in anything so far said. Josiah wondered if the talk were to continue on this level. But the tone changed suddenly:

"You can have it!"

"No thanks," Josiah answered just as suddenly. It was the custom to be brusque with the boss in the more casual encounters. He resented any obvious subservience. He would have resented it more than ever now perhaps. "I'm not having any," Josiah added, to confirm his point.

"You've said it. That little snooping son of a b—he found out a lot of stuff there wasn't any occasion for him to know, and he certainly didn't let any grass grow making use of it! When I think of the things my friends told him—"

"Not me," said Josiah.

"I don't mean you. I mean people for whom I've done favors all down the line. No loyalty—no decency. I think the man had them hypnotized."

"Very likely," said Josiah. "He wouldn't be above it."

"He wouldn't be above anything he could use in his business. So here I am—the horrible example—just as much a warning as though I were strung up in the public park. And I tell you it's ticklish—damned ticklish."

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"It's a little more than ticklish," Josiah said.

"I mean ticklish for everyone."

"You were always afraid of him."

"Wasn't I right?"

"You speak as if we all might soon be in the same place."

"Not here—just nowhere. You weren't thinking of quitting?"

Perhaps that was why the boss had sent for him, Josiah thought—to suggest that he quit politics. That was a fine gratitude for the lies he'd told on the witness stand! But the supposition proved unjust, as the man's next words came:

"Not that you'd have any reason for quitting. As a matter of fact there's every reason why you shouldn't. If the rest of the crowd are in a ticklish spot, yours is rather exceptionally ticklish, and for different cause—"

"Why—there's nothing anyone has on me!"

"Don't kid yourself."

"I'm afraid I don't quite see—"

"No, I know you don't. I'm perfectly willing to be specific."

"Go ahead—"

"I sort of hate to. I have a romantic streak myself."

What had this to do with anything? Besides, the man who spoke was about as romantic as an oyster. An oyster on the half shell. Josiah waited, and the other took his time, having so much of it.

"Yes, a peculiarly ticklish spot," he said when he was ready, "and where you are now there's a vacuum around it or at least a thick piece of padding. Call it what you please. But you better keep the benefit. And

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it doesn't make your position any the less dangerous—your not seeing. You're a useful man, Joe, useful to hold the Party together as long as your reputation holds—and not one second longer. That was my trouble. I lost my reputation. Bob Carrington isn't the only man who can snoop. We aim to know about all there is to know about our people—gives us a handle to hold on to them with."

"I thought you knew about all there was to know about me some time back."

"Sure we did. We went over your record pretty carefully. And there wasn't a thing that anyone would bother with or take very much nourishment from digging into. But that was then. This is now."

"You mean something's come up since?"

"That's just what I mean. It would be a pretty nasty story if it were played up right, and wouldn't do you any good fast. Why—you left a trail a mile wide! I don't like it. I mean I don't like using it. But there are a lot of things I've had to use I don't like. I don't say I blame you. I don't say if you hadn't lost your head you wouldn't have realized. You aimed high enough, God knows! Too high. People such as the Enderbys are bad medicine except in their own crowd."

"Oh," said Josiah. It was a long drawn "oh."

The other man ignored the interruption. "I'm not one to talk. I've been mixed up with people who were bad medicine too. And look what it's got me. *You* look." There was a slight pause of which Josiah was too stunned to take advantage. "Old man Enderby—if he knew he wouldn't say anything—not directly—but he could do us a lot of damage just to get even."

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"Yes," said Josiah, "I suppose he could."

What good would denial have done? There was no use making even a pretence of it. They evidently had him cold—had Paris—had the whole thing. And now they were going to make use of it in some way not as yet entirely clear. Josiah was so stunned he seemed calmer than he really was.

"How long have you known?" he asked. His manner was that of a man who was asking about something unimportant.

"Since before the trial. I wanted to get my information up to date about my witnesses. But I couldn't see that this affected anything you might say on the stand, so I let it ride—particularly so as I still had plans for you—have plans, rather."

What plans could he have? The correction from *had* to *have* was evidently vital.

"You're a valuable man, Joe. As I said a while back, you're useful to hold the Party together—the Party here, that is to say. I'm not speaking of Washington, of course. Though that might come in time. So if you'll stay—just as you are—it might be worth our while to patch you up. You see I myself am temporarily discredited. Though people who don't like Carrington don't discredit me quite as much as those who do. I'm speaking of the public. Every one of them knows my address. They don't know yours—not yet they don't."

Josiah had moved lately to a more expensive residence. But there was nothing very secret about it. It wouldn't matter if the public knew. He wasn't the only politician who lived in a house with doormen and a tessellated

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marble foyer. But the other man wasn't talking about that address. He was talking about Max's place.

"I'm perfectly willing to stay just as I am," Josiah said.

"Fine! There are three measures of success," the Big Fellow continued, "Civic, party and personal. I've done my party here in the city a dirty deal and so I owe it something. I'd like not to have to think of these things for a while—just rest—but I can't—I've got to fix things up the best way I can—hand things over for safekeeping to someone I can trust. And that's you, Joe, because you're honest—money as such is no temptation to you. You can be as honest as you want—the more honest you are the more you'll take the wind right out of the little bastard's sails. Why—if the cards fall right you can be anything you want—state chairman maybe. People think the Organization's done for here in the city—but it isn't—not if it's handled right. We've got a city charter now and reform and everything on the up and up. It shouldn't be too hard a job. We're not standing on the corner like hitch-hikers waiting for a hitch. We're climbing right on the band wagon, and you're the one to do it. You always wanted to be thought of as the secret power. I'll tell you something—the next step to that is not to be thought of at all. It's a peculiar personal vanity—I was tarred with it myself, so I know. Those days are over. We have to grow with the times, and times are changing. As for reform, you must beat Carrington to the draw—if you can."

"I suppose if he were available," Josiah cut in, "you'd offer him the Party here, lock, stock and barrel, instead of offering it to me."

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"No," said the prisoner, "I don't think I would. I might not be able to get it back again some day—if I wanted it."

"And from me you could?"

"Well that would be one of the assurances." The boss smiled, showing even white teeth. He was extraordinarily well preserved for a man of his age—a man in prison. He might easily some day be in a position to take his power back. "But meanwhile," he continued, "you'd be on your own. I won't be able to pass out many orders. Besides, I don't believe in too much division of authority—it's very demoralizing. You can handle things, Joe. Keep your eye on the ball—that's all. And always remember that your own individual interests are best promoted by the interests of the Organization."

"That's what you forgot a little?"

"Just a little. Oh I admit I'm handing you a basket of cats that may scratch a bit. But if you wear gloves you'll make out."

"I'll have to think it over."

"Don't think too long."

Josiah was thinking now. If he'd really be on his own as the big man said he would he might be tempted. And what about Paris? He was in a ticklish spot as they knew about her—he could see the potentialities of this just as well as the rest of them could—but for the past few minutes this matter had been dropped. Was it going to be a club forever held over his head? Josiah was thinking so hard that he wasn't listening for a moment or so, until he was aware that Paris's name had re-entered the talk.

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"Miss Enderby had her value—I don't say she didn't. It was the reason Carrington let you off so easy on the stand, that she'd put in the right word for you in the right quarters. You were good on the stand. Frankly, I was surprised. You lied a little but not too much—"

Josiah cut the sentence short. "What do you mean, she put in a good word for me?"

"With Carrington. He sets a great amount of store by her opinion. Or didn't you know?"

"I know they've been friends for a long time."

Josiah had heard the rumor that Carrington was interested in Paris. It was just a rumor. The District Attorney was really a friend of her father's. But he was conspicuous and Paris was conspicuous, and whenever the two were seen together, as they sometimes were, people read into the juxtaposition a romance which didn't exist. Carrington was too busy and too self-centered to be seriously interested in any woman.

"There's a lot of angles to be considered," Josiah said, sparring for a little more time. He certainly would make no promises without certain matters clear and plain.

"Oh not so many. Stick to our knitting—that's all we've got to do. Though I know there's a group in Washington who think so. Some of the folks there are running a little hog wild. They remind me of Carrington. Do you remember when you spread that report that he was a communist? That was smart—did him a lot of damage—not enough—but plenty."

"He could stand a little damage," Josiah put in.

"You're telling me? Communism. Russia. Russia's a good place to keep away from. Too many people are fussing about Russia, and Hitler, and the revolution in

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Spain, and the Japs in China. Czechoslovakia. How is that our business? As for the Nazis—I don't like 'em any more than anyone else does. They call it the New Order. It ain't new—it's old. I've seen it. I've seen a sort of miniature picture of it closer than most. I've known murderers. I knew a guy who was said to have committed more murders than anyone around, but there wasn't an ounce of malice in him. As for these Nazis—they're too damned deliberate. Wholesale murder—I don't care for it. Germany's a good place to keep away from, too."

"We're anti-Nazi," said Josiah.

"Of course we are! Besides, how would we get the Jewish vote if we weren't? That's the trouble with the world now—everything's too close and too big. We're too far from the days when we had a box-fight announcer to announce the returns. We get 'em now by turning a dial and hearing a voice which people can hear on the other side of the earth if they've got a good radio set. It wasn't so long ago that people generally didn't know anything about anything for months—now they know everything before it's happened. There's a lot of room in the Democratic Party for a good conservative Democrat—like you, Joe."

"I'd like to hear the other side," Josiah said at last.

"How do you mean?"

"There's a catch somewhere, and I'd like to know what it is. You said yourself I was in a ticklish spot. What are you trying to do—reward me for that?" Extremely ticklish, the Big Fellow had said it was—and emphasized the danger. And he'd told ~~me~~ how useful

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he was as long as his reputation held, and not one second longer. Was his reputation so secure then in spite of the spot? It couldn't be because of it. A club forever held over his head—that must be the answer.

"Doesn't my proposition tempt you?" the big man asked.

"Sure it tempts me. Why wouldn't it? But I'm old enough to want to know how much indigestion it's going to give me."

"You ought to consult a fortune teller."

"I don't have to when you're around. You spoke a while back of a matter which is connected wholly with my private life. It seemed to tie up some way with all this, and I'd like to know just how." Josiah had hesitated to bring the subject of Paris in again. In fact doing so was extremely distasteful to him but he had no choice.

The other man looked at him. "You're pretty smart, aren't you?" He paused. "In some ways," he added finally. "I know what you're thinking. The reputation of your wife wasn't too good—which was what got you out of your home town—and in a big city it didn't seem to matter so much."

"Oh you knew that too?" said Josiah. He wasn't too surprised, really.

"Sure we knew it. We're not dopes. But as I said before, that was then. That's over—dead. Incidentally, your wife's conduct has been pure as the driven snow since that time—in case you're interested. I suppose you wish it wasn't."

This was going a little too far, and Josiah started to say so.

The other man made a gesture as if warding off a

blow which, of course, he had been in no real danger of receiving. "It's the truth, isn't it? In that case you could get a divorce and marry Paris Enderby and everything would be just too lovely."

"Naturally I would marry her if I were free."

Josiah surprised himself in saying this. There was something about the boss which made you talk in spite of yourself. It was a sort of force you felt in him. He was beyond all good, and in a sense beyond all evil. He would be quite capable of knowing a murderer, as he had stated so casually, and finding such without malice. He would be quite capable of holding amicable converse with the devil or with God. Possibly this last was one of the reasons his Church had always upheld him. Josiah had sometimes wondered how he'd got so far. Part of this wonder was soothed.

"If you were free and she'd have you it would be different. But you're not free, and have no prospect of becoming so."

"You know too much!" Josiah said.

"That's part of my business—knowing things. Carrington's the only man who knows more. I hand it to him—don't think I don't."

Josiah wasn't interested in the big man's opinion of Roberto Carrington. "You haven't told me yet," he dragged the painful subject back again, "just how Miss Enderby ties in with my political future."

"Do I have to?"

"Yes. As long as she obviously does tie—"

"You'll have to give her up. It's too risky."

Josiah might have guessed. "And if I don't?" he asked.

"I'm afraid that wouldn't be so good—not for any

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of us. Worse for you, perhaps—" Josiah's informer stopped speaking and looked speculatively at his finger nails which were very clean. But why shouldn't they be clean? He was not the type of convict who was put to work in the coal yard or the jute mill or the rock pile. His hands were as white and as soft as they'd always been. Physical labor was as foreign to him personally as was physical violence. He was no murderer. In fact, there was a tale about him that he had cut his finger once on the sharp edge of a paper knife and had got panicky at the sight of the blood. "Worse for you, perhaps—" Josiah wasn't sure whether the phrase was repeated or not. It was spoken so softly. No violence but threat—definitely threat, though it remained wholly in the realm of the intangible. It must have been very important to this man and to his party hierarchy that Josiah should give up Paris, the bribe was so high and the threat so clear.

"I'm sure," the big man went on, still speaking softly, "that Miss Enderby herself would be the last person knowingly to jeopardize your career. Talk it over with her. You will anyway."

"It's a wonder," Josiah said, a cold anger flooding him, "that you haven't talked it over with her yourself!"

"It's an idea. I may be wrong but it strikes me as a pretty good idea."

Josiah was not as averse to personal violence as was this man who sat there so much at home in the best of the prison reception rooms, but his habit of control stood him in good stead. "I hardly think it will be indicated," he said.

"No, I should hate to put Miss Enderby through the

ordeal of coming out to the prison. But it would be preferable to your being at the mercy of those at whose mercy you would undoubtedly be. I'm so helpless here—not in a position to protect you at all, and there are a number of men who'll be jealous of you—be glad enough to have something on you. There's Carrington—though he might hesitate on account of Miss Enderby. There's your own private henchman Max Keg—"The big man was running on almost as if to himself—"Oh there are several reasons why you'll come around to my way of thinking, any one of which would operate. I know them all."

Josiah wasn't very much afraid of threats but he was ghastly afraid that by some means he himself couldn't stop, the giving up of Paris Enderby would be a renouncement forced and unconnected with his own free will. There had been from the first an unreality about the whole afternoon. This had sunk suddenly to that depth of unreality which is nightmare. He'd caught at the name of Max Keg.

"Max is a friend of mine. He wouldn't be party to exposures!"

The Big Fellow shrugged. "Getting information out of Max isn't so hard—so I've been told. In fact I've been told a good deal."

"So I gather! You can't always believe—"

"My sources are generally pretty reliable—"

"There's some alternative," Josiah said. "I don't have to take your job and I don't have to say good bye to Paris Enderby. It's my life, isn't it? Not anyone's else's!"

"What is your idea of an alternative?"

"I hadn't thought—"

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"The priests talk of a place called Limbo. It's occupied by the lightly damned and those who await judgment. It's a sort of outer space. Possibly you and Miss Enderby—" The prisoner smiled. There was something cat-like about him—like a cat watching a mouse.

Josiah didn't like being laughed at. He was relieved when the guard came back into the room, even though nothing was settled. What was there to settle? Parting with Paris was unthinkable, though the whole world and all its contents had been offered him on a platter.

"Well," said the guard with a sort of forced friendliness, "I guess you gentlemen had quite a gab-fest."

The prisoner rose. "That means time's up. We run on a pretty close schedule in this place. George here is a good friend of mine but I have to take his orders."

"That must be something of a novelty for you—"

"I guess it is. Well—so long—"

Again the firm handclasp. The interview was over and the look of uncertainty in the Big Fellow's face, which for a while had left it, now returned. It was the only mark which prison had made upon that bland expanse whose owner carried so high, wide and handsome the infamies which had at last caught up with him. Through Josiah's anger there emerged a not too grudging admiration. It must have been somewhat the same mixture of feeling which the man himself had towards Carrington.

"So long," said Josiah. The other man smiled.

"Someone will be coming by soon," he said, "and will let me know how things are." And then to the guard: "The boys are pretty good to me outside. They let me think I still have influence."

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During the span of Josiah's concern with Paris the scale upon which her importance to him was balanced against the importance of everything else had dropped steadily lower. He had been given to moments of optimism—of thinking that some day in some manner he could not now foresee he would be free to marry her. Meanwhile he must watch his step and see that Paris watched hers. As in his mind he arranged the watching, the fear he had felt while in the presence of the Boss—the former Boss, he ought to call him—became more distant, and self-confidence replaced it. He would be the boss soon—he, Joe Madden—because that was the opportunity of which the Big Fellow had been talking, though he hadn't put it in actual words—not down in black and white—he didn't have to. It was plain enough what he meant. He couldn't go on running things from inside prison walls, and certainly Tom Duffy couldn't, growing sicker all the time. But Josiah wouldn't give up Paris. He'd eat his cake and have it too. Why not?

He'd left a trail a mile wide, so he'd been told. That wouldn't be hard to cover. The new one would be narrow. Josiah was smart. The Big Fellow had said so. He certainly could outsmart these people who would be so glad to have something on him! Opportunity stared him in the face—real opportunity—real power—triple plated. Though the old man had been perfectly right about it's being a basket of cats—scratching, caterwauling, kicking cats to be handled with gloves. Josiah could wear gloves—he'd worn them before. Handling it so, he'd have his chance at last—a chance not heaven-sent exactly, but almost so. He would be on his own. He would beat Roberto Carrington to the draw. . . . What

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was there to fear? Not Max Keg certainly, whose name the Big Fellow had spoken.

They would leave Max's place, or rather the place that was formerly Max's. The lease would soon be up and Josiah had been thinking of making a change. What was all this about it's not being hard to get information out of Max? Max knew the value of silence as well as the next one and his loyalty to Josiah was proverbial. If he knew the truth, which Josiah had sometimes suspected he did, he would be the last to spread it. Max had his weaknesses—women chiefly. He rather fancied himself that way. But he was a useful man. He was a precinct leader now and popular with a certain element which had to be considered. He'd straightened out the political affairs of a number of the lesser night club proprietors, who thought highly of him and with whom Josiah had no particular meeting ground. Max Keg might go quite a distance before he was through. There was always room for man of proven ability and Josiah would now be in a position to do a good deal for Max—more, that is to say, than he had done already. And not because he was at Max's mercy as the Big Fellow had intimated, either!

Things were looking pretty good. The old man had his nerve—sitting there in the prison reception room and telling Josiah he must give up Paris. But nevertheless Josiah must tell Paris what he'd said. She had a right to know anything anyone said which concerned her so closely. Besides, turning things over in his mind, Josiah could see it might be best if Paris left the office. This would be too bad, as he had grown so much to depend on her services there but his dispensing with them would

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be a covering gesture which would fool those few people who had to be fooled. It would be easy for Paris to leave. Everyone knew she didn't need the job—in fact, she gave the amount of her weekly pay check to the Red Cross. For the matter of fact, most people wondered why she hadn't left long ago, so it would cause no remark whatever generally speaking.

There was just a short space of grace Josiah had, planning everything in his mind. After this was turmoil. Paris wasn't at the office the next morning, and the night before he'd had no way of reaching her, as he didn't like calling her at home. He had figured all along that the morning would be plenty of time to recount his story. But how could he as things were? She had sent in word that she was going out of town for the day. This wasn't like her—junketing about the countryside in the middle of the week. A sudden dread seized him, not for her safety but because he guessed that she had gone where safety was the first requisite. She'd been sent for, doubtless, the summons reaching her while she was still within reach, and he himself hardly with the echo of the shutting prison gates out of his ears. The Big Fellow could easily arrange with his friend the guard to make a phone call for him—such a legitimate call too, calling a secretary at the Organization office. The office seemed strange without her. But there was nothing Josiah could do about it.

That night he went over to their meeting place. It was a sort of hunch he had, and he was right. He opened the door with his key, but it wouldn't open far as it was

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chained from the inside. It might not be Paris who had chained it, but it was. As soon as he faced her he knew that he didn't have to tell her anything. He was responsible for that. It was he who had suggested to the old boss that the two should have a talk, and the boss had been rather taken with the idea.

"You went to the prison?" Josiah asked Paris.

"Yes, I went. I gather you think I shouldn't."

"I have no say as to where you go."

"I assure you I was treated with the greatest courtesy."

"I didn't think you were put to work peeling potatoes! But that's not the point."

"Your friend is a most interesting man. I never met anyone like him."

"Naturally you wouldn't. If he had a white beard he'd do as Santa Claus."

"Yes," said Paris, "a sort of benignity. One feels sorry for him in spite of one's better judgment. He told me that as a young man he studied for the priesthood but gave it up because he felt he wasn't good enough. Which is, from what Bob says, obviously the case."

Paris used to call Carrington by his last name. "Bob" indeed! Josiah's eyes, looking away from her for a moment, fell on a half packed bag. Its significance shattered everything. He turned to her again—"You can't," he said, "you can't—"

She cut him short. "Oh my own precious darling, it had to come! We've been heading for trouble for a long time."

"He persuaded you!" Josiah said. "He could persuade the pope that Jesus Christ was never born!" It was rather a blasphemous figure of speech to the like of which

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Josiah was not greatly given. But it cleared the air a little.

The air for Paris seemed to have no need of clearing. She might have been packing a bag for a week-end visit—certainly for nothing more devastating than a visit of sympathy to a well removed cousin. But she had had lovers before, and walked out on them. How was it she had called them—minor occasions? And Josiah had stated that he had no wish to be numbered among these.

"This isn't something," he said to her now, "to be decided all in a moment. Think about it calmly—deliberately. Nobody can tell us we have to part—nobody." And then as she didn't answer—"I'll give up politics—I'll give up everything—"

"They threaten you with total annihilation—"

"That would take some doing!"

"I told you a long time ago," said Paris, "that knowing me might wreck your career."

"You never thought so much of my career anyway—"

"Perhaps not—to date—but it's not over yet."

"In other words, some day—if I go on doing everything I'm told to do, I may amount to something—"

"Don't be childish."

Josiah felt like being childish. He felt like kicking and screaming. His beautiful self-control was torn wide open. He crossed over to Paris's bag and threw the things she had laid in it out on the floor. There weren't so very many things, a few toilet articles, a negligée—not blue—and a pair of stockings. The stockings had been worn and still held something of the shape of her lovely legs. They were extraordinarily fine. You could see through them almost as if they were not there save

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as shadows. The shadow of Paris was everywhere about.

"All right," she said, picking up one of the stockings and smoothing it between her fingers, "give me a week."

"A week's a long time."

"You said yourself this wasn't something to be decided in a moment."

"Very well then. We'll make it a week. But the week hasn't started yet."

She laughed at that, her beautiful laugh. How could Josiah live if he never were to hear it? He held her very close. He could have held her so forever. After the closeness there began a period of time—the week in question—such as he had never experienced. The only word from Paris was a note to Miss Finch, which Finch showed him, saying that she was resigning her position.

"I think she might have given us a little notice—"

"I'm afraid it was my fault."

"Did you fire her?"

"No—not exactly."

"I can't say that I'm entirely surprised," said Finch.

This cryptic remark was followed by a silence and, finally, a departure which reminded Josiah of some of the more trenchant silences and exits of his late lamented mother.

No period of time has no ending. This one ended, and as it did so all the papers contained a full column announcing the engagement of Paris Enderby to Robert Carrington. Robert, they called him—never Roberto—and had idiotic paragraphs about his career and her prominence and photographs of the happy pair. The engagement was quite a topic around the office.

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IT WAS easier to do it like this," Paris wrote, "and don't think too badly of me. Robert knows all about us and has known for some time. So please don't worry on that score. You're having a hard time, I know, but you'll come out of it. Always my love—"

Well, she trusted him anyway. Everyone trusted him. The time might come when he would trust himself. Now he didn't. But he had never before thought of himself as a potential suicide. For several days this thought persisted, and then there began in him a hardening process—also healing—which was a little like death anyway. Death, self-inflicted, was no longer a menace, this process taking its place.

Josiah regarded the rest of his life as a valueless remainder. The basket of scratching cats the big man had willed him would be something to occupy it. What with the hardening, the gloves would not be needed. It was only in the one regard—the matter of Paris—that he found himself helpless. She had taken the situation so completely into her own hands. Her decision was so perfect—so fool-proof—that it was almost a miracle. Her marriage to anyone but Carrington, or her leaving Josiah and remaining herself free—either circumstance might have been acted upon in some way or other. They would have been worth a fight at least. But marriage to Carrington was final.

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Josiah's new apartment had an open fireplace. Alone in the living room for a moment he burned Paris's note carefully. She had taken chance enough with it sending it through the mails. No more chances. He went to the room which had once been Max's and was now his and cleaned out everything of a nature even faintly personal. It had grown a little shabby, he now noticed, a little dull. He would have like to consign the entire contents to convenient flames, but arson was hardly Josiah's hobby. He called in a junk dealer whose establishment he had noted in the neighborhood, and the man gave him two twenty dollar bills for everything, including the linen and the china and the pots and pans. Josiah waited while the stuff was loaded into a van which it didn't nearly fill. He stood for a moment in the empty room which looked rather shabbier and duller than ever, with some dust showing which had been concealed by the heavier furniture, and marks on the wall where the pictures had hung.

All that remained for disposal were the two twenty-dollar bills. That was easy. He gave them to the first panhandler he saw, who received from this largess a shock from which he barely recovered, having a bad heart. Josiah had meant the man no ill. He hadn't known his heart was bad. One thing more. He must inform Max that the lease was not to be renewed. Max would undoubtedly know the reason, but he wouldn't say anything. Josiah had a sense that every one knew—even strangers—even Flo. Did he detect in Flo an added smugness? It was possible. Anything was possible. The emotion of surprise was as dead in Josiah as was everything else. There was the matter of the wedding. He

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wasn't at all surprised at the invitation extended to Mr. and Mrs. Josiah Madden.

He could have stuck to his guns and refused to attend, and lived down the comment the refusal might have caused. But he couldn't have Flo going if he didn't, and how could he forbid Flo's acceptance? Nothing that he could have said—not even the truth—would have stopped her. To be counted among the Enderby guests seemed to be the high point of her entire life. Flo was a curious woman. Concentrating on such, she had developed a certain taste in things. The present they sent—it was customary to send a present when you were invited to a wedding, especially when the bride had been your secretary—this present was a modest silver vase chosen by Flo and the best of its kind. Flo's clothes were so perfect—a little too perfect perhaps—but at least they half concealed the effort given to them. There were times, and Josiah hoped the occasion of the wedding would be one, when she looked exactly like a lady. Flo would be noticed at the wedding even among the many other guests. After all wasn't she Josiah Madden's wife? Yes, Josiah had to go. To which fact he became somewhat reconciled. He would see Paris again and—otherwise—he might not. He might never. . . .

Flo was immediately aware of something which would have escaped her husband's attention. "Why—she's not wearing a wedding dress!"

Josiah replied to the whispered comment. "Isn't she?"
"Not really. She's dressed more like a bridesmaid,

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with a hat instead of a veil. Has she ever been married before?"

"How should I know?"

"Too bad. But she's quite striking."

"Hush!"

"Striking! Why, any woman would have given her right arm to look as Paris did walking slowly up the church aisle with Cyrus—so slowly it would have been easy to overtake her and drag her back—not let her join the man who stood waiting for her. But what could Josiah do about it with Flo's whisper in his ear, and the rest of the church filled with music and then with silence? There was nothing. Nothing except that moment at the house afterwards when Josiah faced the bride and groom and shook their hands and wished them well and introduced his wife. He didn't disgrace himself in any way, passing on as this business was done, making place for the guests behind him. The first time he had shaken the hand of Roberto Carrington had been under circumstances quite other and the victory had been his. Josiah had tricked Roberto then, pushing through to him and talking of the speech he had made, arguing a little, holding him there while the camera clicked. The present handshake was no trick and was without benefit of any recording but possibly the altered circumstances paid Carrington back with interest. Though his look of triumph was not too marked—just the normal triumph of a man who has won for himself a beautiful, desirable and eminently suitable helpmate.

Conspicuously in evidence among the rather motley throng at the wedding reception was an elderly Italian woman who was Carrington's mother. She would have

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been less conspicuous behind the counter of a small grocery shop but she stood her ground. She too must have felt a certain triumph, though she might not have felt so had she known about Paris and Josiah, or even about Paris apart from Josiah. Italians of that class and generation were particular about brides for their sons, and if she'd known she wouldn't have considered the girl either desirable or suitable. But there was no one to disillusion her or likely ever would be. She was shining in a good deal of reflected glory today, being made a fuss over—Exhibit A—a number of people were being introduced to her, especially the politicians present. The other mother, Mrs. Enderby, was of a different stripe. She was very small and quiet, and as Paris had once said of her, disarmingly mild. Not so mild underneath perhaps. She had a peculiar quality of infinite wisdom. She had remained for Josiah a figure in the background but one to be somewhat feared. He had no further reason for such fear.

Besides Mrs. Enderby there were other people present whom Josiah knew only by reputation—several prominent Republicans and some old friends of Carrington not so prominent. There were lawyers and their wives—quite a bevy of them—and there were friends of the Enderbys. Josiah's consciousness was divided between his own personal concern with the occasion and his interest—almost automatic—in the people he was seeing. He wasn't enjoying himself but it could have been worse. Sometimes the two preoccupations merged. There was Bill Brown, for instance, at first only vaguely familiar and then calling up a memory which was personal in the extreme.

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"Why—hello, Mr. Madden! How are you?"

Josiah had the habit of never denying a greeting. "Why—how are you?"

"You don't remember me, do you? Though you were mad as hell at me when we first met."

Josiah was still uncertain of the connection. Rather a handsome fellow the young man was, but he yet couldn't place him. "I'm sure I don't know why I should have been—mad—"

"You told me off plenty—said my friends were right in not letting me drive, and when I asked you if you thought I was drunk you said you did."

It struck Josiah suddenly, the whole thing, and the name too. "Brown—Bill Brown—I remember you perfectly."

"Good boy! I guess it's a business with you to remember names—"

"Somewhat. I'm afraid I interfered that evening a little unduly. Miss Enderby was quite capable of looking out for herself—even in your company."

"You couldn't say more, could you? Well she's not Miss Enderby now—she's Mrs. Carrington. And as she is, I'm going to get very, very stinko—much more so than I was that night. Don't you want to join me?"

"I'd like to but I don't drink."

"Wouldn't this be an occasion for it?"

"Would it?"

"What better could you think of?"

"I see your point, but I'm afraid not—for me."

Josiah had a vision of himself drunkenly airing his sorrows on the night of Paris's wedding, making a spectacle of himself at strange bars. It was a vision which

didn't match with anything he was, not even with anything he might ever become now that the hardening process was doing some of the work ordinarily accomplished by death. "No," he repeated, "I'm afraid not."

It occurred to him that Bill Brown and he were on the same side of the fence now, with a common cause.

"As you say—" The young man might have left then, but Flo—alone for a moment and seeing Josiah—joined them.

"This is Mr. Brown, Flo—my wife, Mr. Brown—"

"Delighted—"

It must have been an impression wholly false which Josiah received, that Brown in the brief glance he gave her placed Flo exactly in her proper niche. It was nothing in his manner surely. The young man's manners were above reproach. People such as he—friends of Paris's—had manners, though they could be rude too—quite deliberately rude. It was never with them a matter of using the right fork or the wrong one, or bowing and scraping, or copying the rules laid down in the etiquette books. It had been something achieved through many generations and stirred into their beings so softly that you hardly noticed it. It was an intangible asset, and Josiah had sometimes wondered what useful purpose it achieved. It might, in fact, be quite as lacking in use as such people might be themselves—or it might not be. And they had a sort of wisdom too—that quality of wisdom possessed by Mrs. Enderby, and again of doubtful use. There were more people here in this room who had such manners and such wisdom than there were in most places. Not the old friends of Carrington, mostly,

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nor Carrington himself, not Flo or Josiah—just here and there they were in this fine room so suited to them.

Josiah had seen the room before. It had been summer when Paris had served him tea out of the precious tea pot like the one which Grandfather Bently had brought from China. The fine brocade now visible had then been covered by chintz. Josiah noted that the brocade was somewhat worn. The Enderbys evidently took weddings in their stride. As for being rude, Bill Brown had been rude on that evening when Josiah had seen him and another young man with Paris at the amusement park.

Josiah remembered that Paris had been wearing a white hat without a crown, like a broad band about her head. No veil. She had no more right to a veil then than she had now. Paris too was gifted with these manners which were so hard to define, and which she and her friends possessed in common. Paris's friends. She evidently picked neither her husbands nor her lovers from among them. She presently separated herself from the little knot of people who surrounded her and—largely for manners—came over to Josiah and to Flo and spoke with them a second time. Bill Brown had turned away.

"You know," Paris told Flo, "I worked in your husband's office, and it will help me so much—what I learned there—in being the wife of a public man."

"Oh yes," said Flo, "Mr. Carrington's a politician, isn't he?"

Paris smiled. "Yes, he is rather concerned with politics. It seems to be a sort of bug which bites men, and—once bitten—they never quite recover."

"Didn't he run for mayor once?" asked Flo.

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"Yes, and was defeated."

"Mr. Madden did that too. Oh—not here—back in his home town."

"Oh really? Tell me, Mrs. Madden, don't you think I'm brave, marrying a politician, knowing as much about them as I do?"

She was so very sure of herself she didn't have to be brave.

"Well it's no easy life for a woman," Flo said, "but as long as you know what you're getting into—"

"Oh if I knew that," said Paris, "if anyone did—" She cut her sentence short and addressed Josiah: "I don't believe you've seen to it that Mrs. Madden has had anything to eat! There's a buffet in the next room—"

She left them then, trailing clouds of glory. As Josiah looked after her, he was aware of Flo's eyes upon him. "Well Joe," she commented, "that's that, isn't it? I have to hand it to you."

"You mean—"

"You know what I mean!" Before they arrived at the buffet table a waiter offered Flo a plate with an elaborate patty on it, and a fork and a napkin. "I suppose I really shouldn't—" She took it protestingly.

"Oh go ahead," Josiah said, "it won't hurt you—"

So he knew what she meant, did he? How long had Flo been aware of the situation? She certainly had been innocent enough about it on that evening when Josiah junior had commented on his father's funny secretary. But there had been plenty of time between then and now and this was by no means the first proof Josiah had been given that the ostrich attitude was unavailing. Flo had held her peace. Well you had to give her credit.

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But this was no moment in which to weigh credit. There were other matters far more pressing. Eating, for instance.

A wedding was a sanctioned opportunity for feasting, whatever people knew or meant or only suspected. There was a large ham on a silver platter—heartier fare than Flo's patty. Josiah remembered how at his own wedding—and Flo's—his mother had provided cold ham and pickles, disapproving of the occasion as she had done. There had been ham and pickles and warm champagne. Josiah didn't doubt that the champagne here was properly iced. He might even try a glass of it. It would be a compromise with the suggestion Brown had made, comparatively harmless. By the way, the champagne at his own wedding had been provided by Tony Genarro. Genarro had been alive then.

Beat Carrington to the draw—beat him at his own game. . . . But the game had almost ceased to be worth playing. Though, naturally, Josiah took advantage of the opportunity which had been vouchsafed him. Once he might not have recognized it as a second rate opportunity, but hardened as he had become, he saw things with a sort of icy clarity. He had been given a skeleton and told to keep it fleshed and functioning. This was up to him—this was the purpose for which he must use his augmented power. He was first and foremost an Organization man and he must keep the uses of the Organization from dwindling too greatly. Keeping them so, holding his ground against further dislocation was something for him to do—a sort of cure for this love which

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had once been a glory and was now little more than the remnants of a disease.

Josiah was careful and—as men go—he was honest. He had his fire insurance business in his pocket and the connections which made it profitable. Everything was on the up and up, as legitimate as taxes. Tom Duffy resigned his place. Josiah had it—and other places. There were elections within the Organization as well as outside it. He attained the state chairmanship—a post of which he had always dreamed—but the dream dissolved somehow in his present clarity. What was there ahead of him? What could there be ahead for a careful man? But if he hadn't been careful he would have been a fool, which was one thing Josiah wasn't. Perhaps he was growing old before his time and age was the matter with him more than anything else was.

His hair was beginning to gray, he noticed—what there was left of it, because it was thinning too. He kept buying hair tonics but they did no good. One thing—he wasn't getting heavy around the middle as so many men did in their forties. Though it wouldn't have made any difference. Age was not to be measured by weight or by hair. It was a germ which crept into the soul. This clarity—this was age. Young men never had it, though they sometimes thought they did. But Josiah didn't envy young men. They had to climb so far before they emerged on this flat plateau from which a view could be obtained. But there was a decline on the other side, and going down hill was sometimes harder on the knees than going up. And even the view was over-rated.

Josiah worked very hard. Nothing was wasted or forgotten or bungled. There was no guesswork. His old dis-

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like of machinery returned to plague him in the realization that he himself was little more than a machine—and in the technical rather than the political sense. A sort of quiet descended upon him which was not to be confused with peace. Some men broadened when they reached a certain phase of living but he didn't seem to. And there had been at one time signs that he might.

These had been Paris's doing and Paris—for him—was no more. She had opened a door for him and then shut it in his face. She had been married for only a year when the news reached Josiah that she had presented Carrington with a son. Why not—why not, indeed? Her former lover recalled suddenly to his memory the one woman he had ever seen who bore to her the faintest resemblance. This was the wife of his brother Amos. He had seen her at the time of his mother's death, and then she too had been at least in the earlier stages of bearing a child. He had been jealous of Amos, he remembered—just faintly jealous. Not that he would have exchanged his own dear Paris for his brother's wife either then or later. Now Amos's wife was well occupied with the tasks of motherhood. She had two children. Thinking of her shielded a little the blow to him of his news of Paris. But after all, didn't Josiah have a son of his own? Why be stunned merely because another man had one? He'd back Josiah junior against any boy the world could produce!

Josiah junior was in boarding school now and seemed to be leading a life quite apart from his parents. He swam, he played tennis, he was an excellent student, with something of his uncle's talent for the older cultures. Josiah, thinking of him, thought of himself at that

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age working ten hours a day in the shoe factory. But he didn't begrudge the boy the difference. What he did begrudge was the fact that there had never been any real companionship between them. He had never had the time for it and now the boy had slipped away from him in some manner and at some instant unsuspected, as if by an exit no one had noticed. This left Flo—himself and Flo. There had never been any real companionship between them either. He had never set himself out to cultivate Flo's acquaintance, save in those distant days when she had been waiting on table at the Lindsay House—and not then except for a purpose rather easily achieved.

Apart from his name and his support, Flo didn't need him now. She had finally made some quite suitable friends. She played bridge, she went to exhibitions and to luncheons and was on a number of charity committees. There was a group of women who collected early American glass in whose councils Flo was quite active. Josiah admired Flo for how well she had done for herself rather more than he had ever admired her for anything. Several people had predicted she would get along. It was he alone who had thought she would never be ready for learning. He had once told Sam Eldridge she would hardly know what to do if she dined with Eldridge and his wife. She could dine with anyone now without embarrassment either to herself or them. Judge Anders, pointing out that she would never be locally in any official position, had admitted that the years might change her. His mother too had found Flo turning out better than she might, even before those years had worked their magic.

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People did change. Look at Carrington. He'd been tamed very considerably—partly by Paris, no doubt—and Josiah had thought him as untameable as a tomcat. But speaking of predictions, no one could have predicted that the little immigrant politician would end up by marrying a woman such as Paris Enderby. It wasn't only Paris. The man had stuff. Even his worst enemies admitted this about him. He was quite a man. Even the Big Fellow had feared him and given him credit for knowing more than he knew himself. The only way you could stop a man like that was by killing him off young. Hell—he was still younger than Josiah was!

15.

THE Republicans were gaining ground. The last election had shown this. And yet locally the Democrats had held their own. And the Organization had done well—meaning Josiah. Had it not been for him, the Organization might have fallen. Josiah was a little surprised at his own success. He couldn't have been sure of it in advance. He was keeping the skeleton which had been entrusted to his care fleshed and functioning to a degree rather beyond anyone's happiest expectations. He had compromised here and there, always stopping before the point where compromise became mere weakness. And he couldn't honestly tell himself that his success didn't matter to him. It was at the least an immediate objective upon which he could concentrate. His deeper opinion that his triumphs were petty was never permitted to affect his course. He had emerged from that danger as he had emerged from others more tangible. He wasn't like his old friend Max Keg who didn't think anything was worth while unless danger of some sort was attached to it. And Max was getting old enough to know better. Josiah was a little disappointed in Max, who at one time had bid fair to amount to a good deal.

It was hard to tell what people would amount to. So many factors entered into it which were not apparent

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on the surface. Max's usefulness was rapidly going down because of the people he didn't mind being seen with and the places he didn't mind being found at. Why, he might be discovered anywhere—in a raided gambling house or an establishment where the diversion was even less legitimate. And now that the police were clamping down in those ways, it was awkward. In fact it was only because they knew who he was that he was told to go on about his business. Not that he would have cared so much or minded an occasional ride in the police wagon. He seemed, in these latter days, to have absolutely no sense of the larger proprieties. There had been a time when a word from Josiah would have been enough but now Max wouldn't listen. Taking everything into account, it was rather a delicate situation. Josiah warned him once. He warned him twice. Max still had his uses. Josiah didn't want to let him go. Besides, he owed him something, he supposed. And then Max really got into potential trouble.

There was a show girl named Frankie Hagen. Men who knew what was good for them bought a ticket when they wanted to see Frankie and looked at her across the footlights. Frankie's husband was the most dangerous of the remaining gangsters. Not even the combined efforts of Josiah, Carrington and the reform mayor could wipe out all crime, and this man was one of the survivors. Avoiding Frankie was the sensible way, but one which Max didn't follow. And Max had become a little too well recognized as an Organization man to make palatable his sudden and scandalous extinction. Josiah sent for Max—he could do no less.

"There are plenty of other women," he told him, "so

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why pick on this one? What do you want to do—have a gun in your back?”

“Oh I don’t know—thinking you may any minute it aids somehow. But you wouldn’t understand that.”

“No I wouldn’t.” Josiah in his care for his particular division of his party sometimes felt like an old hen clucking over a brood of chicks, but this was serious. “Plenty of other women,” he went on. “Not that I have to point that fact out to you—”

“Only one,” Max answered.

“What do you mean, only one? If I had a dollar for every woman you’ve gone for I could buy out Rockefeller. As far as you’re concerned the woods are so full of ’em you can’t walk!”

“I know. But they don’t count. Only one, as I said. I’ve been nuts about her for a long, long time.”

“You mean you’ve been nuts about Frankie? Why she only showed up a little while back.”

“I don’t mean Frankie—”

“Well whoever you do mean, why for God’s sake don’t you marry her? Settle down. It might be the making of you.”

“I’d marry her tomorrow if I could. You must know how it is, Joe—you want to marry a woman and for some reason you can’t.”

This struck home a little. “But you’re free—”

“I am but she isn’t. She happens to have a husband.”

“She won’t leave him?”

“No. Not that I’ve ever suggested it.”

“And why not?” Josiah couldn’t fancy Max as having scruples in such a matter.

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"A lot of reasons. If you must know, I've never had anything to do with her at all."

"You're kidding!"

"I'm not kidding. It just wouldn't be any use. I found that out. I see her—every now and then. I've got to see her but that's all it amounts to. In fact I told her something once—it was how I found out—I thought it might make a difference."

"You mean you told her how you felt about her?"

"No. I guess I didn't have to tell her that. Women are smart that way. I told her something I happened to know her husband had been up to—just to see what would happen, I told her. Nothing happened. Not as far as she was concerned. Not a damned thing. Maybe she knew already."

"Women know lots of things they don't see fit to mention," Josiah said.

"Don't they just? But anyway she didn't give a damn and it wasn't an act either!"

"What did she say?"

"Just that she personally was through with all that, and she didn't care what any man did. I don't know why I'm so nuts about her—she gets me—she always got me. Maybe if I had her for a while I'd be all right. It's one reason I took so to Frankie. Frankie looks a little like her, only taller of course. But there's something in her face—it's as if she was made of wax and the wax might start to melt any minute. Haven't you noticed it?"

"Why should I notice something in Frankie's face? I hardly know her."

"No, no—not in Frankie—in your wife."

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"In Flo?" Josiah repeated it—"In Flo? You're talking about Flo?"

"Yes, Flo. Didn't you ever get wise to how I felt?"

"No," said Josiah, "never." And then—"I've been a fool."

"Oh I wouldn't say that exactly."

Josiah wasn't a fool, whatever else he was, but he hadn't, as Max put it, "got wise" to something which now—looking back—cast a rather sharp pinpoint of light on several matters. He remembered Max's inquiries about Flo at the time of the elder Mrs. Madden's death. This had not been in accordance with strict political etiquette. But Josiah had merely thought Max to be exercising the privilege of long acquaintance, and—not that he would refer to it ever—there was the touch of knowledge he must have had concerning the kind of woman Flo once had been. Then Max had been a little over-anxious for Josiah to use his apartment illegitimately. Finally Josiah had done so—which led directly to the talk with the Big Fellow up at the prison.

That was the pay-off. "Getting information out of Max isn't so hard—so I've been told—in fact I've been told a good deal—my sources are generally pretty reliable—" The Big Fellow had handed it to Josiah almost on a platter, dressed and garnished, like the ham at the Enderby wedding. "Your wife's conduct has been pure as the driven snow—" How had that been proved save through Max? And how would Max be in any place to judge such a thing unless his own vital interests were very close? But if you weren't looking for something you rarely found it.

With so much to consider all at once, Josiah had re-

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treated into a silence which Max finally broke: "I thought you knew—"

"I had no idea—"

"And you don't believe it even yet, do you?"

"Oh I believe it all right!" Josiah was perfectly aware it wouldn't have been so hard to believe, even without the mass of slight but contributory evidence. Flo was a very attractive woman. "I believe it," he repeated, "but I never thought anything before now."

"What would you want me to do?" Max asked. "Draw a diagram? Oh I know Flo's not so young any more and there's plenty of women I suppose would stop traffic quicker. But somehow I always see her as I remember her back home, tapping down the street, so pert and so self-contained. She's my kind. She never was yours."

You didn't take lying down another man's calm announcement that he was in love with your wife. And this was exactly how Josiah seemed to take it. After all Flo was his wife and for that reason if for none other not to be regarded covetously by such men as Max Keg, however much of truth there might be in Max's statement that she was his kind. Possibly she was, and would have been better suited to him than she ever had been to Josiah—if the two of them hadn't landed in jail sooner or later. Max wouldn't be annoyed by Flo's limitations or find them obvious, having limitations of his own.

He was wound up like a watch. "I'm damned if I know why you married her in the first place—"

"That's a long story," Josiah cut in.

"With a lot of angles—I know. But still I don't see. It's plain enough why she married you, of course. She's

a smart girl—has her eye on the main chance—that's one of the things I like about her. Usually, you know, I don't like women very much. I think they're a pain in the neck. I suppose I resent the trouble they've been to me."

"I suppose it was because you liked Flo that you told her about me?" Josiah put an emphasis on "like."

"I told you why I told her. I took a chance. What could I lose?"

"And it didn't work?"

"No it didn't work."

"I could have warned you it wouldn't," said Josiah.

"I suppose if you'd thought it would work you'd have told her yourself. And then we'd all have been happy."

This talk was getting unduly intimate Josiah found. His own private happiness had never been open for examination. He had sent for Max about a matter quite other, and the interview had got strangely out of hand. But he found himself going on with it on this rather novel basis, affording to let the lack of fitness pass.

"If it had worked," Josiah said, "that would have meant my wife was a different sort of woman from the one she is, and if she were different why, you wouldn't have admired her so greatly and the whole thing would never have come up in the first place!"

"I never figured it so but I guess you're right. By the way, I'd just as leave you didn't tell her I tipped you off as to how I feel. If you don't mind—"

"No I don't mind. Why did you?"

"I thought you knew. Besides, I guess I felt like talking." Max rose. "By the way, did you know she knew about you and Miss Enderby?"

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"Yes, she told me she knew."

"What do you figure she really thought about it?"

"She didn't tell me that."

Max looked at him. "It must be a funny life you two lead!" He picked up his hat from the desk then and went out rather abruptly.

It didn't seem to Josiah any of Max's business, the life he and Flo led. He ought to have called him on it. And he ought in some way or other to have shifted the subject of their talk back to the matter of Frankie Hagen. Oh well, if Max wanted to risk his life let him! There were plenty of precinct leaders to be had. The thing was to get Max out before anything happened to discredit the Organization. And yet if Josiah took such a step now Max would think it was on account of Flo. It didn't matter much what Max thought. This talk had the effect—almost immediately—of dulling the regard in which Josiah had always held him. So in a way Max would be right in thinking it would be on account of Flo.

Max had "felt like talking," so he had said. It was usually dangerous to give in to such an urge. In this particular instance it came near to costing Max much too high a price. The potential trouble Max was in from his involvement with Frankie Hagen ceased to be potential. It broke, as you might say, with a bang. It was a bang to which there were no witnesses. But that rather negative circumstance didn't stop Max from being charged with the shooting of Frankie's husband. Josiah, being in the position he was, could have helped him a good deal. As things were, he stayed his hand and refused to become entangled, staying out of the thing rather no-

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tably, stating merely that he knew no more about it than anyone else did. If Max had shot the man he must take his medicine. If he hadn't, that was fine, of course. The proof was inconclusive, the evidence purely circumstantial. Max had a motive but there were plenty of other people who would have had one—not a motive connected with Frankie, but the gangster husband had hardly been a popular character. The point was that Josiah did not use his influence, and that it was in spite of him rather than because of him that Max was finally acquitted.

"He's cold," people said of Josiah, "cold as a dead fish. Personalities—friends—don't count in his book. He runs by what's good for the Organization and for himself—nothing else, nothing else at all." Josiah was not quite so lacking in personal motivations as he was said to be, but you had to know him a good deal better than most people did in order to realize this. The strong silent man was of a type to breed such legends.

The prosecuting attorney was unable to convince a jury of Max's guilt, but his usefulness to the city was over. So many of Josiah's associates seemed to come to violent ends, or at least upon evil days. They seemed to be joined in a lethal fellowship with concrete weapons of destruction. There was Tony Genarro and Perley and—more indirectly—the big boss himself. And now Max had been added to the list. Max married Frankie—this honorable amends being almost obligatory under the circumstances—and got himself a job as a bartender in Chicago, so Josiah heard. But later, when in the course of his work Josiah was in Chicago, there seemed to be no sign of him. He would turn up some day—doubtless

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he would turn up. He knew a lot of men whose addresses were listed by the telephone company.

At first Josiah had thought it was Flo who had given him away about Paris Enderby, she having known of it from Max. But Flo denied this flatly, and Josiah on second thought was inclined to believe her.

"Why should I talk?" she asked. "I don't want to do anything to hurt your business. Plenty of people likely knew besides me and Max. Those things get around. I should worry what you do outside your home—not within reason. And don't get any ideas about me and Max. I liked him. But he wasn't anyone I'd be seen with."

"If he had been?"

"Oh well, why bring that up? I've turned down chances better than Max. I'm satisfied with my life just as it is."

"You're lucky."

"Don't I know it?"

To Josiah Flo was a strange woman—strange in every sense. He sometimes wondered if he were making a mistake in not trying to know her better. It would not have been worth while, he decided. If you knew such a woman through and through, what did you have? And who could answer that question except someone far wiser than Josiah was aware he ever could become. She didn't care what he did. He had this now from her own lips as well as from Max's. It was too bad he had no wish to take further advantage of his granted freedom. "Outside your home—" she had said. It would have been

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rather an extensive freedom as he was at home so little save for sleeping and changing his clothes.

He had plenty of places to go but not of the sort Flo had meant. He joined a club wholly non-political in character. He had joined it because he had found he could, rather to his surprise, and it was his habit not to miss any bets as good as this one was. He was automatically a member of the Ardsley Club, of course, and several lesser societies. But those were connected wholly with his work. This club's membership was not drawn from the Democratic Party save in rare instances. And it gave him considerable satisfaction to know that most Party politicians would not have been found eligible.

The building was not as handsome as the building which housed the Ardsley and the food was not as good nor the chairs as comfortable. But being there gave Josiah a sense of being a successful man among successful men—men who were none of them beholden to him in any way, nor he to them. Just his success he had in common with them, that was all. He liked to listen to them. Their opinions were not typical of the opinions he heard in his daily rounds. He already knew the opinion of every member of the Ardsley—two sets of them—those they admitted and those they kept to themselves. But what these men thought also had to be taken into account a little in fixing up election slates. The Ardsley was so strictly an Organization institution that there wasn't much to learn there which Josiah didn't know already. This place was social. In fact there were but three or four clubs in the whole city which were more strictly social by the standards by which such things were judged. At the Ardsley he must always be

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watching his step and the steps of everyone else. Here he didn't have to. He could relax. And if he wanted to do a little useful listening he did it, as it were, on his own time.

It was dull sometimes but so many things were. Brilliance was as rare among these new associates of Josiah's as it was among those whose names were unlisted in the Social Register. In fact he suspected that the existence of many of them would have been as drab as was his own save for the liquor they consumed. Not that they got drunk. They didn't. At noon they drank a little—some of them not at all. At five or six they drank a little more. With dinner still more. And during the evening a varying quantity of strong spirits. They held their liquor well—rather better than the customers in Perley's back room had held theirs. Josiah wasn't tempted. He had never forgotten his father nor forgiven him for being worthless nor discounted what that worthlessness had denied to him himself. Scotch and soda in tall glasses wasn't how the elder Madden had managed it. His poison was usually taken straight from a bottle which could be slipped handily in the pocket. Josiah liked the tall glasses and developed a taste for ginger ale with a bit of lemon peel at the edge of the glass.

His companions always tried to talk to Josiah about politics—after all wasn't he the boss of the most powerful political organization in the city?—but he was a better listener than he was a talker. Then they would try fire insurance—he knew about that, too. One thing he didn't know about was golf. They seemed to take golf very seriously and spoke respectfully of “breaking 80”—a feat which few of them ever achieved. It was a little childish in Josiah's view, but he didn't say so. They

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had an odd combination of childishness and something quite different. They took things with an amplitude of grasp which reminded Josiah in some ways of the general viewpoint of Paris Enderby. What they meant by politics, for instance, wasn't what he for the most part meant. He found that out sooner than they did. They discussed the problems of Europe and what this country was going to do about them, which wasn't politics at all in Josiah's narrower sense of the term.

"This Neutrality Act Congress passed some time ago, and then revised—why it isn't worth the paper it's written on—"

"We're going to hell in a hack—"

The proponents of this theory were of the opinion that the President was doing the driving of this particular vehicle. "He wants us to get into the war—"

"What war?" That seemed a fair question, coming from Josiah.

The Spanish Civil War was over that winter with a fascist victory, and you couldn't call Hitler's broken promises—his overrunning of the rest of Czechoslovakia—war exactly. You would if he did that to us, but in Europe it was just annexation by force.

They kept talking about what we should do *if* war broke out, the *if* showing it hadn't. Foreign entanglements—the Monroe Doctrine—all these subjects were discussed in greater detail than Josiah was accustomed to hearing. It wasn't only Hitler. On the West Coast it seemed that the Japanese had always been considered a menace. But Japan was a long ways off, farther even than Europe, the Pacific being wider than the Atlantic.

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"But there are a good many small islands that we don't know very much about—"

"I know—stepping stones—"

That brought up the subject of Hawaii and the Philippines—we knew all about them. There was a subversive element right in this country—right in this city. If at any time we should be drawn into war this element would rise up fully armed. They were organized—they were waiting. That was one story. But we had a pretty good police force.

"The best in the world," said Josiah. "I don't know much about world politics—I don't pretend to—but when it comes to the city police force—"

"I suppose you know just about all there is to know?"

"I'd hardly say that."

"Isn't the Commissioner a friend of yours?"

"Not too good. I've always felt that a police chief should have a chance to be one. I keep my hands off."

"Is that a fact?"

The way the question was asked cast doubt on Josiah's statement, but it happened to be true. In the past Josiah had had a good deal of sympathy with the police. They hadn't been a bad lot even then, with plenty of honest ones. But too many—especially those at the top—had been men constantly afraid for their jobs. The care such men had had to exercise had reached down often into something you didn't like to look at. But things were different now under the reform mayor and under Josiah and under Carrington. Politics made very strange bed-fellows, Josiah sometimes thought. However, this was not the place in which to go into all this, so Josiah left his doubted statement unconfirmed.

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"The police wouldn't stand for any nonsense," was all he said.

The talk veered back to larger issues. Why should we get drawn into trouble? We had two oceans to protect us. What were such oceans for?

"Purposes of trade. If the Nazis and the Fascists get the rest of the world and become self-contained it wouldn't do our trade a dime's worth of good. They'd have slave labor—we couldn't compete with it—"

"You've got something there. Oh I suppose a war might not hurt us so much—it might give business a lift—"

"How can you say that? I have two boys, eighteen and twenty—"

This wasn't an answer as to how anyone could say that war might not hurt us or give business a lift.

One of the men turned to Josiah who hadn't spoken since the matter of the police. "You have a boy, haven't you?"

"Yes, but he's not eighteen yet—he's still in school."

"Give him a few years—"

"And then what?"

"We'll see. No use worrying about it. We can't affect it. By then anything may happen."

"You mean by the time my boy's eighteen?" Josiah asked. "That'll be in May of '41. He was born in '23. I was in the last war myself."

"And you came through in good shape—"

"Very good shape as a matter of fact. But I was a pretty tough baby. I don't know about my kid."

"A bit soft?"

"Well—you know how it is. I wouldn't want to see

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anything happen to him—not to save Europe, I wouldn't. If the bastards come over here we'll all pitch in."

"Oh sure. I'm a fair shot myself—belong to a hunting club."

"It's better than ducks," said Josiah. He didn't say any more for a while then. He had a feeling he'd said a little too much. He rarely talked of himself to these men, or of his boy. And he certainly ought not to have admitted to them that for him the whole world economy boiled down to a question of Josiah junior. It must have sounded a little foolish to men who were so greatly concerned about the state of the world in general. Their talk of it went on increasingly, and the thing that Josiah noted was that more and more it shuttled back to the world here, as though the two worlds were irrevocably woven into one cloth.

"I understand they bombed Madrid quite a bit, and Madrid has skyscrapers and the skyscrapers stood up."

"I guess if the Spanish skyscrapers can stand bombing ours can."

"They may have improved their bombs by then. Aviation's getting ahead fast."

"That's the only thing that can stop war."

"What is?"

"Machines that can wipe out a whole civilian population in a few minutes. It wouldn't pay."

"What about poison gas?"

"They say that's hard to control—same as germs."

"Everyone dead or plague-stricken—nothing left—no buildings—no food—nothing. What would be the point?"

"We'd have to begin all over again at the beginning—"

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"Who would you mean by *we*?"

That was carrying talk a little far, Josiah thought. But perhaps it was useful to listen to.

It ought to have been more useful than it was, Josiah felt. It ought to have helped him to make up his mind about certain issues concerning which his present rank in the Party entitled him to an opinion. And before very long this opinion would be coming up.

The issue most to the front now was the possibility of a third term for the President in 1940. The President was not an Organization man. But he sometimes took the advice of Organization men, admitting a respect for their knowledge in getting out the vote without which he himself couldn't do much. Without the vote he couldn't have been elected ever. Possibly this talk of '40 was nonsense. It was an unwritten law that no man could remain in that office for three terms. The third term idea had started under cover—just a rumor. You could still call it a rumor if you wanted to. But Josiah must support the rumor or have none of it. It was rather a large order making up your mind about the president of the United States and having your decision count, even a little. Josiah needed all the help he could get.

From the strictly Party angle the problem was simple. What were the man's chances of being elected if he did run, and were they better than the chances of anyone else whom the Democrats could put up? Who did the other side have to run against him? This made a difference too. No one of any real caliber, though there were able men in the Republican Party. In fact the President

had alienated considerable Democratic support by taking two of these into his cabinet merely because he thought them able. A man who would do that would do anything—not only would but could, Josiah admitted. The New Deal . . . it was a term coined by the President himself to cover a multitude of innovations with many of which Josiah could have no traffic.

All these immense sums spent on Relief—all this Social Security of which the employer paid half—the thing had a tendency to pauperize that part of the population most affected. It wasn't practical, or worthy of a man who could be as practical as the President was upon occasion. Josiah was familiar with some of these occasions at first hand, and their factual existence somewhat reassured him. They made of the national head of the Party someone whom he could almost understand, just as the occasions of his ruthlessness made him that way. Because he could be ruthless—or at least seem so—if it served not so much his own purpose as the purpose of something which even Josiah's newly acquired clarity couldn't wholly place. Not that he wished to place it. He had no wish to come under a sphere of influence which might disrupt the job he had to do—which was all he had left in satisfactions.

Whatever disasters Josiah had fallen heir to privately, publicly his career had never been more promising. As far as his own Organization was concerned he was exactly what the doctor ordered. He made it not matter nearly so much as it might have mattered that the mayor was a reforming Republican, that Carrington was the district attorney and that the Organization wasn't what it had been once. Josiah couldn't perform miracles nor

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was he expected to. He was careful and he was honest. But this was all right too. Because for anyone who wasn't honest the pickings would have been too lean for the risk. Josiah doubted very much if and when, as he had said he would, the Big Fellow, who was still in prison, were to ask for the Organization back and get it perhaps, he would find it worth keeping. Josiah fancied himself as being right there to pick up the pieces. Meanwhile he didn't want to become involved with matters that really didn't concern him.

He didn't want to become involved—not with the war in Europe, which most people seemed to think was bound to come sooner or later—or with politics on a national scale. Yet the connection between national and city politics seemed to be growing stronger. Washington was nothing to Josiah—a town built on a mud flat, the legal residents of which didn't even have the vote!

Of course the senators and the congressmen and the men who'd received Washington appointments returned to their native polls every year and voted in style, but the native population were completely without influence. Men like Senator Eldridge, for instance—Samuel Hopkinson Eldridge, an Old Guard Republican if ever there was one—he took good care to vote. Josiah hadn't seen Eldridge in a long time, their paths having diverged so greatly, but he hadn't forgotten him. There was probably nothing that either one would do for the other. There had been once, Josiah recalled.

Eldridge, it was known, hated the President. He was a leader in one of the several groups that had reason to hate him. He called him a self-seeking demagogue, a traitor to his class, a revolutionist. He laid at his door

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everything which had gone wrong. The President was for men like Eldridge their pet devil come to life. He had changed an economic structure which suited them into one in which they could find no peace. They crucified him on the cross he had thrust into their unwilling hands.

Josiah was as different from the President as any of these men could ever be. But he was bound to him as they were not. He was a Democrat. The President was allegedly a Democrat and as near to being a national boss as anyone could come. Josiah was loyal to the boss. And yet he felt towards him a certain puzzlement, an uneasiness at something which was beyond him. Yes, any answer, any opinion, would be difficult for Josiah to give without prejudice. There was so much to be said on either side. He had no wish to judge the man or to be swept along—against his own judgment—by a rush of wings to carry him to a distance with which he was unfamiliar.

The President was not afraid of the unfamiliar. He wasn't cautious at all and didn't look sufficiently where he was going, Josiah felt, or where his acts might lead. His enemies were angry because he didn't fear them. They wanted to be feared—it was their due. His lack of fear—his strength—was a spiritual strength, and—through it—he could overcome obstacles, brushing them aside as though they were nothing. This was a quality wholly separate from his human abilities and showed how wholly the spirit was divorced from the flesh—particularly in him, who walked heavily. For a period of years he had been very ill. He had always been rich. A little spoiled, perhaps, by illness and riches? But a great

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man nevertheless, and Josiah admitted his greatness and recognized the fact that he had more right to leadership than most leaders had.

The Bible had it that man is made in the image of God. It was a resemblance which certainly couldn't be checked. The Bible was full of slick phrases sounding as if they might be true, at least in a metaphorical sense. Josiah wasn't sure that he believed in God. And yet there was something about this man of whom he must form an opinion—something which made you wonder. It was when you met him face to face, or heard his voice over the radio, or even thought about him much, that you couldn't avoid a sense of being touched by a sort of force. You couldn't describe this sense or lay a finger on it. But it was there. And he could be so very human and ingratiating. Though never at your feet—nor at your throat either—which was where it was said the Hun always was—at one or the other.

The President evidently regarded the Hun as a more immediate and pressing problem than Josiah did. What was happening in Europe, or was due to happen, seemed to Josiah very far away. Even the arrival of the king and queen of England made it no nearer. They were just nice people. They ate hot dogs and went to the greatest and newest World's Fair. A king and queen were not very important except to the people who wanted to get a look at them and say they had. Josiah got several looks and shook their hands and replied to their polite and intelligent questions.

England was democratic in action, democracy resting on a conception of moral purpose. The English ruled themselves just as we did—possibly more so—and this

king and queen of theirs were the ornaments on the top of the cake. But it was after their visit here that the President tried hard to get Congress to rewrite the Neutrality Act once again to do away with the ban on the export of arms to warring countries. Congress annoyed the President. He wanted to run things without its help—or any help, so his enemies said. This might be true. After all he had been born rich and was accustomed to having things his own way. Josiah noted that when he said what things were to be done, sooner or later they were done.

Late in August of this same year—Josiah was always very busy in August—Germany and Russia signed their non-aggression pact. He had always distrusted Russia. Then England and Poland signed a military alliance which Germany demanded that England drop. Hitler had had designs on Poland for some months and finally his armies marched into the place. There had been negotiations pending between England and Germany. Now these were broken off. Hitler's armies advanced. And on a Sunday morning, over the radio, the English Prime Minister announced that a state of war existed between England and Germany.

Then France came into it. War was nearer, certainly declared, official war. But we were neutral, even with the final repeal of the arms embargo coming up in Congress. It was not our war. As for Josiah, he still had his own immediate objectives against the objectives which concerned him less. So it was not his war either. It never could be. Josiah was over the age when he would be in the way of disposing of a machine-gun nest of Germans, and be given a medal for it. Such adventures were of his abundant past.

16.

THE Big Fellow was soon due for a parole, but meanwhile the prison gates still enclosed him, and going up to see him at least every month or so was a chore which someone had to do. A number of his friends didn't like going to the prison, even on a visit, and there were others who didn't bother any more—which showed how his influence was waning a little. Josiah was about the most faithful of any, but then Josiah owed him a good deal. And on this particular day there were two birds being killed with the same stone. Josiah wanted his opinion of Frank Braddock.

Frank—not to be for a moment confused with the Frankie who had married Max Keg—was the head of a law firm, Braddock, Olney and Braddock, and was a member of that club which Josiah had joined, the only member he'd really got to know on any close basis. The Braddock who had been Frank's father was dead and Olney was retired. Frank had money, he was a Democrat, he thought Josiah was the greatest man in the world, and for some reason best known to himself he wanted to get into politics. To this end he was willing to spend his money with extraordinary lavishness and he wasn't above ringing doorbells and climbing the long steep stairs of tenements. It made Josiah blink, the menial work Frank would do and the checks he would sign. They were good

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checks too. He was Irish and Catholic, with a wife and five children, and his personal life could withstand the most rigid investigation. His grandfather had swung a shovel. He himself was entirely presentable but he could trim his sails to any wind. He was a careful man after Josiah's own heart. Completely sane. He didn't fall in love with other men's wives or get involved in scandals—honest, sober and industrious. It didn't matter very much that politically he was comparatively inexperienced. He was eager to learn. And meanwhile, apart from the more routine tasks he performed so willingly, he was particularly willing in minor legal troubles—the securing of citizenship papers—things like that.

Josiah nursed him along as he might nurse any valuable and tender asset, and when the process was completed he'd have something. Frank was a few years younger than he was, and Josiah had reached that stage in life when he must exchange his position of protegee to the Anders and the Vliets of earlier days for one of patron to a protegee. Max Keg hadn't turned out so well in that capacity, but Frank was the ideal incumbent. However, Josiah wanted the Big Fellow's opinion just the same. The prisoner's judgment was still fairly shrewd and he might catch something not visible to the less discerning eye.

The callers found their host cheerful, cordial, in good health, and obviously pleased at their coming. But Josiah couldn't tell what he thought of Frank, or whether he thought anything. He wanted to find out—why else had he brought Frank up there?—so he made the sudden and unauthorized statement that his friend had a train to catch and shoved him out—which treatment was

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taken without a ripple. Frank could always be depended on to do as he was told—not to argue.

"Well?" Josiah asked.

The old boss shrugged. "He's very pleasant. A useful man if you don't expect too much. What have you in view for him?"

"I haven't quite decided. There's this damned city council, and we can use a lot of candidates."

"I see no harm. What does he think about things generally?"

"If he acts all right what does it matter what a man thinks?"

"It might. You never can tell."

This wasn't quite enough enthusiasm to suit Josiah.

"He makes an excellent campaign speech—not so much anything he says as his way of saying it—"

"I know what kind of speech he makes! We have a radio here. In fact there's talk of letting me have one of my own, if I listen only to certain programs and only at certain hours. I heard him last election when you had him campaigning for your congressman. Very simple and non-belligerent. But now I see he smiles a bit too easily."

"What's wrong with smiling?"

"Nothing. I'm just wondering how he'd be when the going got really tough."

"Well, he'd never do anything to disgrace us!"

"Not like me?"

"I didn't mean it that way. I'm not comparing him to you."

"Who would you compare him to?"

"I hadn't thought."

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"If he didn't have the advantages he has, he'd be a muldoon."

"What's a muldoon?" Josiah asked. He'd heard the word but he wasn't sure of its exact meaning.

"It's an old expression—before your time, I guess. It means a regular—"

"Oh Frank's regular!"

"Sure he is. That's just what's wrong with him for present tastes. A muldoon is a good old-fashioned ward heeler who can be depended on to obey orders and sometimes gets something given to him to keep him happy. This man has money and a college education and goes to a good tailor for his clothes. But he's the same breed of cat. You've got to offer the voters now something a little more—well, how shall I put it?—something with a little more meat in it."

"And dish out trouble for yourself at the same time," Josiah commented. He was disappointed in the verdict. The old man must be slipping, or possibly embittered.

"Man is born unto trouble," Josiah's former chief added, and then dropped the subject of Frank Brad-dock, going on to talk of the war and the coming Democratic national convention. "Of course you'll go?"

"I suppose I'll have to."

"I'm afraid it'll be expected of you. I'd go myself if I could, but even if I'm able to go at that time my presence might be a source of embarrassment."

"It's too bad you can't be there instead of me," Josiah said. "I never was much of a gadabout." He hadn't made up his own mind yet about certain issues. And he wasn't taking orders—not official ones, that is to say. The independence pleased him at the same time that it left

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him somewhat at loose ends. He worked very hard to gather these together.

"I used to be," the big man said, breaking in on Josiah's thought.

"Used to be what?"

"A gadabout. But not any more of course. Which is just as well. It's given me a chance to do a lot of reading."

"What kind of reading?"

"History—philosophy—the lives of great men. You have to discount some of it. It's hard enough to get the facts straight which are going on all around you. But it's given me a new slant on a lot of things. I never had much education before I came to jail. In fact, if I'd known then what I know now I might never have come. I'd have a clean record—I'd be in a position—oh what's the use? I envy that man in the White House! I envy him like hell!"

Now they were getting somewhere. If the verdict on Frank Braddock had been unsatisfactory, possibly the verdict on the President of the United States would be enlightening.

"Do you think he'll be renominated?" Josiah asked.

"He will if he wants to be."

"That's the trouble," Josiah said. "Nobody knows yet whether he wants to be. He won't answer."

"He's probably waiting to figure out his chances of getting re-elected. But if he plays his cards right there's no reason why he shouldn't be. Who else have the Democrats got?"

"Who else have the Republicans got?" Josiah put in.

"They've got Carrington—among others." The big man smiled as he mentioned Carrington's name. To

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Josiah it hardly seemed a smiling matter, but he didn't comment on it.

"You keep in touch with things, don't you?" he asked instead.

"Oh a little. I have to do something to pass the time, outside of reading. Though the reading's really part of it. The trouble with most education is that it's handed out when the pupil's too young to take advantage. Not that I can really take advantage—I mean, have a hand in what's going on."

"Oh the boys still take a lot of stock in your opinion," Josiah reassured him.

"They wouldn't if they knew it."

"You mean you don't say what you really think?"

"Not about everything. You see, I've changed. They haven't. You haven't. Oh you're doing all right. But you've got to recognize what's going on. It isn't only me that's changed. It's everything. And sometimes I wonder if you fellows know it. If I were right *with* you I might be able to put you wise. But if I were right *with* you I likely wouldn't be any different from the rest of you. I hate Carrington—I hate his guts—and I'd do anything I could to stop him, but maybe he did me a service sending me up here where there's room enough to turn around."

That was a strange description of a prison—room enough to turn around!

"Why don't you write and thank him?" Josiah asked.

"That would be quite a letter, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, it would."

"Well, the redemption of man is always an interesting topic. But I'm afraid I might not be able to handle it. In

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fact I told the priest so when he suggested I might tell Carrington of the service he'd done me. Yes, Carrington was the humble instrument—"

"I'd never call him humble," Josiah cut in.

"Not in most ways." The prisoner paused—"Very interesting man, the priest here—"

"I never went in much for priests," said Josiah.

"No, of course not, in the part of the country you come from. I was raised by priests mostly. And I let them down—I let them down bad."

"I believe you studied for the priesthood—" Paris had told Josiah that.

"So I did. Yes, I was raised very religious but I never quite connected it up till lately."

Josiah was getting restless. He wondered if Frank had really taken a train or was waiting for him at the station. If the Big Fellow had anything definite to suggest why didn't he get ahead with it? All this loose talk wasn't accomplishing a thing.

"If there's anything you think I ought to do that I'm not doing, let me know." Josiah rose.

"Oh I'm not giving orders now."

"I know you're not. Not officially. But there might be something—"

"Sit down!"

That was an order and Josiah sat. The chairs here were rather hard. "Speaking of the Republicans," he said, trying to lead back into something practical.

"Not that we were," his companion interrupted.

"Yes we were—a while back! I was going to say that we have no jurisdiction over whom they'll pick and yet

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what we do ourselves depends on that so much. If we had any way of finding out—”

“You were a Republican yourself once, weren’t you?”

“Yes—”

“Maybe that’s what’s wrong with you.”

“Maybe it is—”

During this talk Josiah had grown more and more aware that his former chief was, in some way or other not apparent to the naked eye, disappointed in his handling of the matters which were now coming up. He had said he hadn’t changed, and intimated that he ought to have changed. He’d told him there were things he didn’t know, and intimated that he ought to have known them. Even in prison, as he was, the man still had influence and Josiah had the uneasy sense that if this influence were thrown in a different direction from himself there were a number of men who would suddenly discover themselves capable of wresting from him his present position.

“I’m afraid,” the Big Fellow continued, “that we can’t find out who the other party’s going to put up, for the simple reason that they haven’t found it out yet themselves. But be that as it may.”

“I guess you’re right—”

“Sometimes I am. I was right a while back when I handed things over to you. I had a job to be done then and I figured you as the man to do it. You were. The job now is a little different.”

“And I’m not the man?”

“Well there isn’t anyone else, if that’s what you mean. Anyway, as you yourself were rather quick to agree, I’m not giving the orders any more.”

“Who is?”

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"You, I suppose, such as they are."

"What is this new job?" Josiah asked.

"Oh it's not new. It's just different." But the man who wasn't giving orders wouldn't say wherein the difference lay—he just went on talking while his visitor continued to sit on the hard chair provided in the best of the prison reception rooms. "When I think of what's going on outside I feel so damnably helpless! That's my real punishment, and yet without it I might never have known. Of course I always knew that things were bound to change. We all knew that, I think. But not in our time. It was something for the future—the distant future. Maybe the joke's on us. Though it's the young people who'll get it in the neck. What happens to me doesn't matter a damn. What happens to you doesn't matter a great deal. But the young ones—even the babies—what happens to them matters. I know gangsters better than most. I know how their minds work. I recognize the system when I hear about it. I don't think you quite realize, Joe—most people don't."

"I have enough to worry about!"

"So do most of us. Our own petty troubles. Why, even I—"

"What have you to worry about?" Josiah asked, and meant it.

"Nothing—really. Though Carrington would like to think I have. I get along fine with the warden and the guards. The priest is a good friend of mine. I have money to buy my own food. In fact I'm in a preferred position as far as personal worries are concerned. It's why I can afford to take the large view."

Josiah rose again. He could stand just so much of this

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sort of thing and no more. "I guess most of the fellows here don't see it like that."

"I've tried to make them see it—to give them my slant on things. It's the least I can do. You know, I didn't use to believe much in reform, but now—" The man stopped.

"If you don't watch yourself," Josiah told him, "when you get out of here you'll run a mission!"

"I think I'd be good at it. And curiously enough, that's one job where a prison record wouldn't be against me."

"It's an idea—"

"Decidedly so. By the way, the Republicans are smarter than they were once—don't forget that one, Joe—"

"I won't."

The free air outside the prison did little to restore Josiah's peace of mind. The Big Fellow wasn't giving orders any more—that was true enough—but Josiah had entered his presence valuing his opinion, and now this value—upon which he had leaned more heavily than he admitted—was deflated. Besides, he didn't like what the banished monarch had said about him. Josiah could have his moments when he regarded what he did as unimportant but he didn't care to have anyone else regarding it in this way—and intimating that he couldn't measure up to something more complicated. What was this different job for which he wasn't considered good enough? And the old man didn't think so highly of Frank Braddock either. That was too bad, or would have

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been if it had mattered more what he thought. But Josiah would have to explain to Frank at least part of what had happened.

Frank was waiting at the station as Josiah had hoped he would be. It would be a relief to talk to someone who was still in his right mind.

Frank rose from the slatted station bench. "Well, what was the verdict?"

"He liked you fine. But that wasn't the point. We had one or two confidential matters to discuss."

"He's a great guy, isn't he?"

"Used to be, but just between you and me he's getting rather odd."

"I understand men in prison do. Stir-crazy, I think they call it. I didn't notice anything while I was there."

"No, it was after you left. Confidentially, of course—"

"Oh sure—no use spreading that kind of talk."

A train came along and the two men got aboard it, settling themselves for the dull trip back. They put their hats on the rack above the seat and brought out the newspapers they hadn't finished reading on the way up.

"I never thought," said Frank, "I'd be going to a prison to find out how I stood."

"Just a courtesy—he hasn't the power any more."

"Then we might have saved ourselves the trip."

"No, it was worth it. And it pleased him, my bringing you. But he's slipping pretty fast. If the parole board doesn't get busy soon I'd hate to say what might happen to him. Though he told me it didn't matter, what happened to any of us!"

"If that doesn't matter, what does?"

"Exactly! He seems to have some idea that if he were

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out of jail he could straighten out the whole world. He's been doing a lot of reading and talking to the priest."

"There's no one a better Catholic than I am," said Frank, "but I wouldn't take everything the priest said—not everything. Besides, he might have misunderstood." Frank opened his paper.

Josiah looked out of the window. The green of May redeemed the view a little, though the news was more worth looking at.

The Dutch queen and her family had fled from Holland and were lodged with the king and queen of England in London. The new English prime minister had made a speech in Parliament: "We have before us many, many months of struggle and suffering. You ask, what is our policy? I say it is to wage war by land, sea and air . . . against a monstrous tyranny never surpassed in the dark and lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy."

The new prime minister was half American. His saying such things gave Josiah a gone feeling right in the pit of his stomach. It was the compulsion back of the words which affected him more than the words themselves. It brought the war closer, a man's being constrained to say such things. And they didn't sound foreign at all, really, because if they'd sounded foreign it wouldn't have counted for so much. It was as though—however briefly—Josiah were given the sight of a man fighting for his life—not just one man but all men together. Was it a sight connected with what the Big Fellow had been talking about in his crazy way? The new prime minister wasn't crazy. He was a very sane and able man Josiah had always heard. Too bad he wasn't Amer-

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ican a hundred per cent. We could use a man like that in this country—either party could use him. Now if the Republicans had a man such as that! But they didn't, of course—fortunately for the Democrats. These narrower urgencies drew a gradual curtain of protection across that larger vision which for a moment had seemed so close.

It only showed what had happened to the former boss, that there had been a reserve in his reception of Frank. If he'd been his former self he would have felt exactly as Josiah felt, that such men were not to be found on every apple tree. Frank Braddock was so extraordinarily available. Nothing to cover up about him—educated, ambitious, a credit anywhere. Willing to work, to take orders, to spend his own money. All these assets were important—especially the money—and not so easy to find in the person of one individual. Let the Big Fellow get around to find a few men like that! But he couldn't, of course, being immured in a spot where they would be definitely not present.

Josiah was disturbed at the change in his former chief—more disturbed than he cared to admit. The man had repudiated himself somehow and in doing this had repudiated Josiah. And had taken the change as though it were for the better. A muldoon! That was what he had called Frank—a ward-heeler who sometimes gets something given to him to keep him happy! Frank with his law degree and his bankroll and his pleasant smiling manner. The Big Fellow had said he smiled too easily. Well, he wouldn't have said that if he could see him now not having a trace of a smile on his good looking face. Frank was pretty clever about the reactions of people he

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met, and Josiah felt sure he knew perfectly well that the old man hadn't been too much impressed. This didn't make the difference it would once have made, but it made some. Josiah had had in view for Frank something rather big—that was out, at least for the present—but there were lesser honors. He and the Big Fellow had mentioned one of them.

"How would you like to be a member of the City Council?" he asked his protegee.

"You mean you could make me one—just like that?"

"It's an elective office. But I could put your name on the slate."

"I'll think it over."

"Don't think too long. It's not any too soon to take the necessary steps." Josiah spoke rather sharply. Why should Frank have to think it over?

"I'll let you know in a day or so."

Josiah was a little disappointed in Frank. He ought never to have taken him up to the prison. Nothing more was said for a while and Frank took out a pencil and started doing the cross-word puzzle on the back sheet of his newspaper.

"What's a four-letter word for a place where herrings are dried?" he asked at last.

Josiah knew a lot of four-letter words but these were not of the meaning Frank was after. He must be polite—he must play Frank along—if he didn't look out he'd have him sticking to his law business exclusive of politics altogether. "Rack, wouldn't it be?" Josiah questioned.

"No not rack—there's no C in it."

"I'm afraid I'm not much help on puzzles—never went in for them—"

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Hardly! In fact, Josiah thought them a waste of good time. All they accomplished was teaching you a collection of useless definitions. Silence again. Josiah looked at the date on his paper. Josiah junior would be seventeen tomorrow. He'd forgotten, though it had been mentioned at breakfast. He must do something about it—send some money. A boy always liked money. This coming summer Josiah junior was going to a ranch out west, and then he had one more year in school. They never had taken that camping trip together. Every year there had been talk of it but something had always interfered. And now the boy had his own friends and his own diversions. Besides, Josiah senior was always pretty busy during the months when a camping trip would be in order. This coming summer was no exception. What with the national convention and the mass of local detail which no one but himself was competent to handle, Josiah looked forward to more work than even he was accustomed to getting out.

Tonight he had dinner at home. He didn't always, by any means, but tonight he had said he would unless something unexpected came up, and nothing had. Nothing which would interfere with his having dinner at home, that is to say.

He looked at Flo across the table. Maybe it was worth a woman's while to spend as much time and effort on her appearance as Flo did. She held her age remarkably. He remembered what Max Keg had said of her, that she looked as if she were made of wax and the wax might melt. It hadn't melted yet. "I'm damned if I know why

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you married her in the first place," Max had told him. Rather late now to speculate on that one—more than seventeen years late. There were candles on the table. Were candles made of wax too? He wasn't sure. Anyway candle light was flattering to a woman. He was sufficiently a stranger in his own house to notice such things—not that he was interested either in the woman or in the house. Besides, it wasn't a house—it was an apartment. But you called it a house—your own house. Flo had parted with her modern furniture and now went in for early American. It had been a recurring bone of contention between them that he'd let his mother's old pieces go to his sisters. Flo said she could have used some of them. But how could he have known this at the time?

"I was up at the prison today," he told her. "Took Frank Braddock up there to see the Boss." He had to say something—not just sit there and eat.

"That awful place," Flo answered, "it just makes me shiver to think of it!"

"Oh it's not so bad. I only see the pleasantest side of it, of course."

"Yes, of course, but even so. And I suppose you have to go."

"Practically that."

"We ought to invite the Braddocks here," Flo said.

"We might. I'll let you know." Josiah wasn't sure whether this would be indicated or not. He had put Frank up for membership in the Ardsley Club, but that was business. If it had just been a question of Frank, but bringing the wives into the picture—sometimes it was useful and sometimes it wasn't. . . .

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"Did you remember to send Josie a check?" Flo asked.

"Yes. As a matter of fact I sent him the money by telegraph."

"I hope he can get the cash on it."

"Well if he can't he doesn't deserve having it!"

"You mean if he can't get round the rules? They don't like it, our sending him extra money. They think his allowance is enough. I sometimes wish we'd picked a school where they weren't so fussy."

"Amos said it was the best."

"I know he did. It's a wonder he wouldn't have recommended his own school."

"He didn't want the responsibility."

"Maybe he was afraid Josie wouldn't turn out well. I guess he's sorry now."

"I wish you wouldn't call him Josie!"

"If I called him Joe people would think I meant you."

The maid came in and changed the plates. The Maddens had two servants now, this maid and a cook. The Hannah who had served them in the earlier days had found life in the great city unsuited to her taste. This had removed the awkwardness of her dismissal. There had been many servitors between Hannah and the present incumbents. This one wore a neat uniform, dark gray in color, and—for serving dinner—a white apron and cap to match. Hannah would have thought such fripperies beneath her dignity as a free citizen.

"I joined the Red Cross today," Flo said, changing the subject.

"I thought you always were a member."

"Oh I was, but this is different. There's a group—you

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know, my glass club group—we're all going to take First Aid. I think it will be very interesting. Besides, women like us must set an example."

Josiah looked at her. "The responsibility of leadership?"

"Exactly—"

"I give you credit."

Flo would have been surprised if she had known how much credit Josiah gave her. But she had no way of knowing. He never told her either by word or act. It was odd how two people could occupy the same house, the same room even, and—until comparatively recently—the same bed, and instead of growing closer grow farther and farther apart. Flo thought of it quite often. She was fond of Josiah. He was very good to her.

She was glad she was going to take First Aid. And she was learning to roll bandages too. She enjoyed working with her hands if the work wasn't too heavy. The costume for rolling bandages wasn't very becoming. White made her look stout. Maybe later she'd get in some work where she could have a regular uniform. Some of the women did—grayish blue like the French soldiers. Horizon blue the color was. If she ever was eligible to wear such an outfit she would go to a first class tailor and have it made right. A uniform to be right had to be correct to the last little detail. Some of the women who wore them looked sloppy, as though they'd got into their brother's coats by mistake. A uniform such as Flo had in view for herself, eventually, would be expensive but Josiah wouldn't mind. He never made a fuss about bills the way the husbands of so many women did. She often told herself how lucky she was. And some people, in-

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cluding Max Keg, had thought she would be upset about Josiah's affair with Paris Enderby!

She hadn't been upset at all. Well just a little perhaps, just when she had first suspected it. But after the first automatic jealousy had worn off she had been rather impressed. If Josiah had got himself mixed up with some little floozie it would have been different—someone who'd taken him over financially or had made a scandal. Poor Max Keg. He had always been so crazy about her! She'd started turning him down back in the dark ages when she'd been waiting on table at the Lindsay House. He'd had nothing to offer then except himself, and later he'd nothing to offer either—not to her, he hadn't. Just himself, and he certainly wasn't worth taking any chance about. If she'd been in the way of taking such chances—which she hadn't been—she would have picked something more important than Max was. All men were pretty much alike in some ways she had long ago decided.

Flo rose and went into the living room. Josiah had gone in there a moment before, or rather gone into the little alcove where the phone was. When he was at home he spent most of his time at the phone. Why hadn't he used the extension in the bedroom? There was a program she wanted to hear on the radio. But she could hardly shift him now. He was at home so seldom that when he was the last thing she wanted to do was to make him feel as if he were in the way. And he thought she'd told about him and Miss Enderby! Why, she wouldn't do a thing like that. In fact she'd tried to stop Max from telling—tried every way she could—every way—and then he'd told after all. Max was weak. She didn't have much use for weak men.

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The living room was lovely—absolutely pure colonial. There wasn't a single false note—not one. And she had one or two pieces which experts assured her were quite good enough for the American wing of the Metropolitan Museum. Her drapes were good too, very much in character. And she'd found some old panelling with which she had redone the mantel, having the panels set in over the original wood so that they could be taken out if the family moved at any future time.

Who would have thought twenty years ago that she would now be living as she was? No one—herself least of all. Everything of the best. And a fine husband and a fine son. She looked about her. She felt, beneath the thin soles of her small shoes, the old French carpet which was just the type of carpet the American colonists of the wealthier class had brought with them from the other side. And now it belonged to her. If the Germans ever got over here, as some people thought they might, and bombed the place, she'd kill them. Yes she would—she'd kill them with her own bare hands. She'd built up something—and the building hadn't been too easy—and she didn't intend it to go for nothing!

17.

HELLO Joe—

"Hello—"

"How are you, Joe?"

"Fine, and you?"

"O. K. I guess. I wouldn't mind knowing what's going on here."

"Plenty."

"I'll say! He'd have got it anyway."

"Sure. There wasn't anyone else—not anyone who could stop the Republicans. The Republicans are smarter than they used to be."

"That's a mouthful. But I don't like it, do you?"

"I like it all right. My mind was made up some time back."

"Oh so was mine—so was mine. But no one asked me. Did they ask you Joe?"

"I don't recall. It was so dead open and shut—"

"There's the mayor, Joe. He said he wanted to meet you."

"Fine! I've been wanting to congratulate him. He's put on a fine show here."

"It's not his show—nor ours either! We're here in Chicago because we have to be."

"I'm always being places I have to be," said Josiah, making his way through the crowd to where the mayor

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was. He was sweating in the heat, and so was everyone else who was crowded into the lobby of the big hotel.

No, it wasn't his show nor his friend's nor the Chicago mayor's. But at that, these machine politicians were in a better way than the senators and the congressmen and all the rest of the Washington men who were milling about, phoning and talking and diving in and out of their numbered suites like rabbits making use of their holes, and sometimes saying too much and sometimes too little. And speaking of rabbits, almost everyone here had come prepared to bring the same rabbit out of the same hat. There wasn't anyone else who had a Chinaman's chance of licking the Republican candidate. But perhaps the president of the United States was modest and had to make sure, and so had sent his own emissaries instead of trusting his fate and the fate of the country to the usual channels. We all make mistakes. In over seven years the President had made a good many. He'd been on the wrong road before—as now with his emissaries—but sooner or later he could always be counted on to show up in the place he was supposed to be. With him you had faith. As things were you had to have faith.

Maybe the war would be over soon. But how could it be unless Germany won? France had fallen. Italy was in it now. Things looked bad. And yet here at the Democratic National Convention, the war, the actual fighting shooting war, was still a long ways off.

"Hello Joe—"

"Hello—"

"When you checking out?"

"Tonight if I can get on a train—"

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"Oh they'll have a place for you, Joe—there's arrangements made. Come over to the Blackstone, room 1098—"

"Sorry, promised the mayor—"

"He's a great guy—"

"He's done a nice job here, all right."

"I understand the Missus is going to say a few words this evening—flew special from Washington—"

"I'll have to take that in. She's quite a speaker. Heard her on the radio."

"Have to hand it to her, don't you? Children all grown and married—"

"I know, and she doesn't just sit down and be the First Lady—"

"Nor the last, I hope."

There was a silence so brief it could hardly be called silence. They didn't mind the Third Term. Weren't they all working for it—wouldn't they go on working? But if the war went on and we got into it, would there be a Fourth Term too? The President had the support of the bosses, their undivided support nationally. In small ways the bosses would be running the campaign but in big ways they would be window dressing like the flags and the bunting and the bands. And they took it, which was odd. It wasn't only Josiah who took it—they all did—and yet their opinion had not been asked. They had all come up in greater or less degree against something they didn't understand. Josiah's sense of this made him feel less alone. They were all important men—elected either directly or indirectly to that leadership which in a democracy was always competitive—an aggregation of big shots like headliners in a circus, and the limelight was somehow denied them. Yet the Party owed the President

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a good deal. Where would it have been now without him?

Dead open and shut it was, dead open and shut. The voters would turn out en masse, third term and all. You could go by the book just so long and then you had to know the time to throw the book out of the window. Maybe this time the Republicans had outsmarted themselves with their candidate of whom no one outside of his business associates had ever heard up to a couple of years ago. His nomination was called an expression of the popular will—popular will, hell!—a very, very clever publicity job was what it was.

"You ought to stay over, Joe—"

"I can't. I have things to do in my own home town."

"Haven't we all?"

That was it. In their own territories such men as these were never oppressed with a sense of their own uselessness.

"I presume we have—"

"I fancy yours is a town that takes quite a bit of doing!"

Josiah smiled in acknowledgement of a praise which hardly needed to be stated. "Well we have the primaries coming up and September isn't so far off—"

"I'll say it isn't! Got your candidates lined up to suit you?"

"Most of them."

"Your lines holding?"

"I guess so. Too early to say yet. But I can't be batting around the country and tending my own knitting at the same time."

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"No one can. They ask too much of men in our position."

"Much too much."

The dissatisfaction was largely unspoken, but Josiah could feel it. There was a danger of feeling it too deeply—exaggerating its scope. There were considerations—the most important one being that the Party had a triple-plated candidate who would stop the Republicans dead in their tracks. The Party was lucky. There was a rumor that it was curiously divided. But Josiah doubted if the division was dangerous. It was the Republicans who were divided—square down the middle!

"Hello Joe—" "Hello—" "Hello—" "Meet the mayor, Joe—" "Meet the governor, Joe—" "Meet the senator from Arizona—"

There were a lot of men here whom Josiah had met before, and others whom he knew by reputation only and who knew him that way. He had never before functioned so far afield. He was filled with a realization of the vastness of his country. Not that the distance mattered, but the spaces bred different problems, different men—and differing—and in this ease of gathering, this shrinking—they were all squeezed so close. Except for their nationality they had so little in common. The Southern drawl, the Western burr, that First Lady, who was American and a woman and was so unlike so many others who were also women and American—such as Flo for instance Josiah had finally become acclimated to the variations of a great city—variations as great as anything here—but knowing them, they had not seemed so great to him—not for a long time. He was familiar with their common denominator. And there was a common denominator

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here too, but it was still strange to him and he must therefore take it on faith. He was somehow not in a mood for faith, having no visible job to do. He was wasting his valued time.

He'd been in Chicago before—in fact he'd been out to the Coast, and south and north. He'd swung around the country more than once on vacation trips and trips connected with insurance. But this was different, this was Joe Madden the politician, the Boss, in his habit as he lived, doing his job in connection with the people, or seeming to. And they were people with whom he was not familiar. He was wasting his time, and yet the candidate would need his support. You couldn't let the Republicans in—not now you couldn't. It was important. It was perhaps the apex of Josiah's career and he felt small for it, like a pin on the top of a mountain.

He would be relieved to take the train and to get back East where he had some real say and could see that Frank Braddock's name went through for the Council. He could do that in spite of the fact that Frank himself wasn't too enthusiastic. But Josiah had spent far too much effort on the man not to have his way with him now. It was a question of who had the power, and Josiah still had it over men such as Frank was, assets and all.

Frank's name went through for the City Council but when November came along he didn't get elected. And as a candidate he had seemed like an answer to prayer. So steady, so reliable, and doing everything he was told to do. . . . Well now he could give all his time again to

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his law business, which was a pretty good business and also steady. Better luck next time. His defeat wasn't anyone's fault—certainly not Josiah's—save inasmuch as Josiah was so buried under a weight of other matters. As he'd told his acquaintance at the convention, you couldn't be batting around the country and tending your own knitting at the same time.

The President was a different sort of candidate. He never did what he was told. He was always making it a little harder for his backers—and at the most crucial moments. He was always doing things without consulting them. Take that destroyer deal with England coming up in September—fifty destroyers were a lot of shipping, and maybe we needed bases in the Caribbean and maybe we didn't. Just before election it didn't make such a good impression with a great mass of the voters, and the ones who liked it would have voted for him anyway. And yet without a by-your-leave and using his own methods or none at all—not on the surface at least—he got re-elected for his third term! He stopped the Republicans—he and the war. The war made a shambles of the whole Republican organization, dividing it into two sharp factions—intervention and non-intervention. The Democrats as a party held their lines and went pretty far out on the limb upon which their leader was already established and from which he had called upon them to follow him. The few Democratic non-interventionists quietly—sometimes not so quietly—took a walk and were not too much missed. One of these said it was a bad sign to be thinking about the one thing so much, especially when that thing was aid to Britain.

You had to give aid to Britain and take the chance of

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war. You were taking it anyway. Josiah certainly didn't want the Nazis coming over here and if the British Isles fell they very well might. Josiah wasn't a non-interventionist, though he didn't talk about it as much as some people did. He had the habit of silence, and he didn't have the time. He didn't agree with all the legislation the President was putting through—he never had—and his mind wasn't yet wholly made up about him. But if his opinion hadn't been asked before, it certainly wouldn't be now. The President was reelected, and that was the main thing. Josiah had had his moments of doubt about that. It had been a campaign marked with bitterness, and the Republicans, grown smart, might have surprised you. They might, but they hadn't. They'd missed an opportunity which had been most decidedly present—missed it despite their nice new Republican candidate who didn't really represent them. The Democratic candidate signed the bill for the Selective Service Act, having speeded Congress up about it, when it might have been wiser to have postponed the matter till after the election. The Democratic candidate never seemed concerned with the smaller wisdoms. It showed the measure of the man that the voters still supported him.

The opposition cast doubt on the legitimacy of that support. In the city they tried to uncover fraudulent registrations. There always would be a certain number of these. It couldn't be avoided. Anyone in practical politics knew this—not that they admitted it publicly. What did they expect Josiah to do? Change human nature all of a sudden? As for any deep laid plot to obtain such registrations, he wasn't guilty. One or two of his

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precinct captains may have been. It was their job to get votes and Josiah couldn't be at their elbow every minute to know what they were up to. Josiah's own honesty could have had no greater proof than the fact that his own candidate, Frank Braddock, had been defeated. At one time Frank had thought Josiah was the greatest man in the world. Whether he still thought so was problematical.

Twenty-one to thirty-five, that was the age range for Selective Service. It seemed to Josiah fair enough that men in this age group should be given a year of military training. It had been within this period of his life that Josiah had had his. And this would be just for purposes of defense, and to provide for such by increasing and training the armed forces under a fair and just system. The registration day was set for October 16th. This was extraordinarily close to the November election. Josiah of course was not personally affected save for an extra burden of detail piled on his already overburdened shoulders. Knowing as much about registrations as he did, he was naturally called upon.

Just for purposes of defense. . . . Someone said it was democracy's best defense to make representative government work at home. This was a good high-sounding phrase of the type which Josiah mistrusted. Of course representative government worked! Wasn't this new Congress—this Seventy-seventh Congress that was coming in in January—representative of the people who had elected it? Someone said that the United States was responsible for the collapse of international democracy. Another phrase. Surrounded by phrases which gave him only a sense of confusion, Josiah did what had to be done.

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It was in a way heartening to know that the confusion seemed general.

It was a curious mixture of fear and confidence with which Josiah's country was now imbued. It was the greatest country in the world and it was wholly dependent on the survival of another country for its continued existence. Both these seemingly contradictory facts were true—or true enough. You couldn't get around them somehow, though some people tried to. Josiah didn't try to get around anything. He understood the simple act of actual fighting. This had been proved in the past. What was going on now he didn't pretend to understand. The President began his third term. It was a moment "unprecedented in the history of the union." Perhaps it was. England was being bombed all the time, and the British fleet saving us from destruction. But you could stand just so much of crisis, and then the crises became commonplace.

There was another side to the picture. Business everywhere had picked up. The unemployment figures were way down. Insurance was booming and Josiah was making money out of that, having, as he had, the most valuable sort of contacts. Had he been merely an insurance man or any other business executive, he could have managed as well as such men did manage. In ordinary times he could have handled even his work as Democratic state chairman and Organization boss in the city and in the county. But these were not ordinary times—no, they were unprecedented—and over Josiah's head and around him like a heavy mist were responsibilities—in a sense

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indirect—which the combination of political affiliations and crisis had formed, and he couldn't reach them or control them. He sometimes felt that he was left where he was, with all his high estate, because no one had time to get someone else. Anyone who could have ousted him—and there was hardly anyone who could—was much too occupied with larger issues to bother to replace him. The old questions which used to occupy the government and the Party seemed to be largely forgotten, as though thrust hastily into graves from which they would not now be raised. In their stead were the lend lease arguments and the debt-raising legislation and other matters without number which didn't directly concern Josiah. And yet everything concerned him.

The world about him was moving like a fast train. Or it might better be said that he was in the train, aboard it, a passenger by virtue of his position and not his wish. Sometimes he clutched his seat and sometimes in the welter of smaller detail he forgot where he was sitting, or at least was unaware of the speed at which his vehicle was travelling. He was wearing large shoes and his feet hadn't grown to fill them. He was tired, and the shoes gave him a shuffling step. And yet he had of authority all the air and manner. Sometimes he stooped a little. But many tall men stooped and no one minded it except Flo.

"Straighten your shoulders, Joe," she told him when she noticed it.

Flo, in her smart tailored uniform, never stooped. For the volunteer defense work which had sprung up in the city Flo had developed an unexpected aptitude. She was tremendously occupied with committee meetings and plans and the raising of funds and the recruiting of

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workers. Josiah felt such matters should be in the hands of professionals—that is, if civilian defense were needed—and if it were not why bother? He didn't remember that in World War I there had been any such mobilization of unoccupied women for an aid and a service which was not yet in question. But the propaganda value was inestimable. Besides, Flo was having a good time and so were the rest of them. The test would come later when the novelty wore off. Those who stuck it out then might very well form a nucleus of women who could be used for anything which might or might not happen in the unpredictable future. He doubted that Flo would be one of these. She looked surprisingly young in her uniform and rather cute. It was better than collecting old furniture and no more expensive. Flo had done pretty well for herself and continued to do well. She hadn't reached the end of her rope as sometimes he suspected that he had himself. This idea was faintly disquieting. He still held towards her a certain degree of resentment.

She'd formed the habit lately of having breakfast with him quite regularly instead of just occasionally. It interfered somewhat with his perusal of the papers, but for the most part he could shut her chatter out or at least not encourage it. Suddenly he caught a name—Carrington—Mrs. Carrington.

"What?" he asked.

"I met Mrs. Carrington yesterday—you know—"

He would always know, where Mrs. Carrington was concerned. "And how did you happen to meet her?"

"Why shouldn't I?"

"No reason—"

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"She addressed a group of our workers. You'll never guess what she's doing."

"Probably not." Josiah's tone was a little dry. He would never set himself to guess what Paris Enderby, now Mrs. Carrington, might be doing. And it was certainly none of his business as things were now. He really had no wish to discuss it with Flo.

Flo was looking at him. "Aren't you curious?"

"I suppose so. What is she doing?"

"She's in a hospital."

"You mean she's ill?" Josiah's urgency gave him away.

"Oh no! She's studying to be a nurse."

"Well," said Josiah, as judiciously as possible, "if the war goes on and we get into it I fancy we'll need nurses."

"That's what she said. She said it was very important and that soon a short course will be arranged for volunteer nurses."

"You mean these First Aid courses? I thought they were already flourishing."

"No, no, it's more than that. Regular work in a hospital. She said it was very hard, and nothing to do if you didn't intend to carry it out."

"Separate the sheep from the goats—"

"She said nothing of that. In fact she didn't describe the work in detail—just how important it was—that was all. Of course I've known about it for some time, but many of them hadn't."

"How could she be down at your meeting if she's working at a hospital?"

"Oh she's not at the hospital all the time—only so many hours. She's an odd sort of woman, isn't she? And yet I can quite see what you saw in her."

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"Then can't we let it go at that?"

"You always did," Flo answered him. "But I suppose now it doesn't matter any more, anything about her—not to you, I mean."

"Was that what you wanted to find out—why you brought the subject up when you didn't have to?"

"In a way. It always seemed to me odd that you could really care about anyone as much as you did about her."

"The fact that I still do, I suppose, is even odder. But then you just said that she was an odd sort of woman."

"Yes," said Flo, "you can't help looking at her and listening to her in spite of yourself. And she doesn't seem to bother how she looks or what she wears. Not even a decent wave in her hair—my fingers itch to get at it—"

"To pull it out by the roots?" Josiah asked.

"I didn't mean that at all!"

At that question and that denial they lapsed into one of their frequent silences. Josiah returned to the news. The Lend Lease Act had passed the Senate. This had been on the radio the night before, but the morning paper went into it in greater detail. The Selective Service seemed to be working quite well. It wasn't resented as it might have been. Building up the army wasn't such a bad idea. Josiah had heard a rumor that they were thinking of extending the age beyond the twenty-one to thirty-five range. They might take boys of eighteen. That was pretty young. Josiah junior would be eighteen in May. He'd be through with school in June. Next year he'd be in college. Well, a year of military training wouldn't hurt him—might in fact be a valuable addition to his education—and at the end of a year the group affected by the draft would be released to go about their

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business. Unless we got into the war ourselves. . . . It hadn't been decided yet what the younger Josiah was going to do with his life.

So Paris Enderby was working in a hospital. Why not? She was strong, she was intelligent, she was still young enough to endure instruction. Josiah remembered that she had worked for eight months in a business school in order to be eligible for the job in his office. And her present sacrifice would have back of it a motive even more vital. She hadn't waited for any selective service, any government order regards training. But Paris had always been inclined to do what she did on her own initiative. Some might say that it was an unsuitable occupation for a woman in her position to choose. In her talk reported by Flo even she had admitted that it was hard. Paris at menial tasks—doubtless participating in the eternal scrubblings and sterilizings which formed such a major part of hospital routine—Paris sweetly taking orders from brash internes and gruff doctors—accepting the complainings of querulous and ill-mannered patients—Josiah couldn't fancy it somehow, and yet it was vivid for him. Well, women in England were doing the same thing—women of a birth and a position even nobler than Paris's own. But in England things were different now—different yet. Perhaps Paris's chief value would lie in talks such as had been so lately reported. Mrs. Robert Carrington's word would be taken. Besides, "you couldn't help listening to her in spite of yourself." Flo had said so, and surely Flo would not be prejudiced too greatly in her favor.

For so long now Josiah had been trying to think of Paris merely as Mrs. Carrington. But she was still an

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individual in her own right. Most Americans were—which was their strength more than their weakness. As for Paris, news of her had cleared Josiah's brain of the fatigue which had settled there. He felt suddenly younger—more able to tackle the many problems which beset him. There was so much to be done. What was he doing sitting here reading the paper like a man of leisure, a man afraid of starting the day? He rose and got his hat and his ever accompanying brief case. He left the house without saying goodbye to Flo who had gone to her room. This was too bad, because Flo had conferred on him a kindness.

All the Organization leaders—not only Josiah—were having heart failure. In the last election they hadn't had much to say—just a lot of work to do—but in this one there was a mayor coming up, and a mayor was local. And the present mayor, who had been in the past a sort of reform Republican, was being considered for the Democratic ticket. Considered by whom? There could be but one answer to that question—one man or group of men who were in any position to consider him, other than the Organization itself. Washington could step into their affairs just so far. They didn't want this mayor—not even if they won with him which they likely would as he'd never been defeated. If he were defeated now there were plenty of people who would say they had thrown the election. Nobody wanted him except perhaps the voters. In his time he'd been everything except an Organization Democrat, and he wasn't going to be one now—not if it could be avoided.

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Josiah was not so vehement against the man as were some of the others but he could see it wouldn't do to have him inside. He could do a lot of damage inside. Maybe he knew this. Maybe the idea that he should join up with them had emanated from his own astute brain. And he'd had plenty of chance to sell his idea to the High Executive. He was always going to Washington on some mission or other. He was like Carrington in wanting his finger in every pie. Came of a better family than Carrington did—small-town up-state people—and you couldn't tag him with any foreign label or say he was a Communist even though some of his views were pretty radical. But for the matter of that so were the President's! If the President thought so highly of the mayor why didn't he make a place for him in his cabinet? The Organization would be left in comparative peace then, in the midst of a war-torn world, instead of seeing its life's endeavor dissolving before its eyes. But the great man didn't solve the problem in any such manner, so a small and cautious war was fought with the national head of the Party.

Josiah and the other leaders in the Organization were good at fighting. They'd had plenty of practice even among themselves. You either had the strength to win or you didn't. It was the voters who had saddled the city so permanently with its precious mayor, but in this pre-election, pre-primary fight the voters weren't consulted. Josiah hated to go against the President, but the Organization was his first duty, his first loyalty, his first responsibility. The candidate he picked, advising with the other leaders, was a good political Irishman who'd done some excellent work in breaking up some gangster syndicates. He was a lawyer of course and had at one time been an

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associate of Carrington's. The two had had a falling out and he'd come over. He was a tougher man than Frank Braddock was and had come to the front without benefit of a private fortune. And there was nothing that the mayor or Carrington or anyone else could find against him. It had been Josiah's earlier vision of himself, a career of picking candidates, but he hadn't known then how the market could be glutted with them and how you no sooner got one election out of your hair than another was making tangles in the same place.

In the previous election Josiah had worked loyally in support of the President, overlooking the fact that his opinion had not been asked as he had had the right to expect. But he worked against him now—not against him personally, but against his candidate. The great man knew about many things but local politics was not his line and he ought not to have interfered. Why did he bother? He surely had larger issues. . . . Everyone had. The primaries went through quite uneventfully. Perhaps it didn't matter any more who was mayor or what happened to any political party. The present mayor didn't seem to care what party backed him, as long as he got what he wanted and gave the people what he thought they should have. He ran again anyway on a sort of private ticket with what support he could muster—which was plenty. He still had the President's backing. In fact, the President came right out for him in the heat of the campaign, dropping all party lines.

Divisions didn't seem so tight-drawn any more. Yet the trade name of a party still had a definite value in terms of votes. Any retailer will tell you that the well established product had the edge on unknown brands—

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which was something that those eager people who wanted to carry on government along non-partisan lines didn't understand.

The mayor wasn't such a bad sort. He didn't believe in Santa Claus as so many reformers did, and he'd worked with the Organization on many occasions. He'd also worked against it. If he were reelected he would still work against it but it wouldn't be like having let him in—he wouldn't be inside exactly. That would have been much too high a price to pay for almost certain victory. This was no time to function without the support of a responsible party government—no time to welcome within sacred portals a man whose party affiliations were as puzzling as the mayor's. When a man's affiliations became too puzzling you could begin to wonder about him just a little. The Organization could win with its own hand-picked candidate. It was united as it wasn't always and the nominee was typical of the best they had to offer. Honest—safe. Safe as Josiah was himself.

The city Democrats put up a stiff fight. They had to. Their early experience of fighting for the spoils stood them in good stead. The spoils were meager now—hardly worth fighting for—but the technique was the same. There was a good deal of name-calling in both camps, though Josiah himself had no particular talent for invective. It was a weapon to be used, so he thought, only when your cartridge belt was empty, and speaking your opponent's name too often advertised him unduly. Josiah was a noncombatant, officially, and he didn't rate being attacked—being called a liar and a leech and an insurance magnate who'd risen to power through means the most devious. It was the mayor's doing. He wouldn't come out

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and say so but he obviously held Josiah responsible for turning him down for the Organization ticket. The naive onlooker, to hear him talk, might wonder why he had ever considered running on such a venal one, and it would have been a little hard to explain to the uninitiated.

"We could have had him," Josiah whispered, "if we'd wanted him, but he was a little too rich for our blood."

The election wasn't won yet, either way.

18.

IT WAS certainly a very strange country, this country of Josiah's. You had to admit that about it. You had to forgive it its trespasses. And you had to admit also that it was great enough to carry both the strangeness and the trespass, knowing them as you must—being part of them. There was so much Josiah knew and so much he didn't. Particularly this last. Skepticism was part of the creed by which he lived. It was a simple creed, not God-inspired, not come to him out of any burning bush. But it seemed to suffice, like the canned and dehydrated rations the chemists were perfecting for the uses of the army. Its articles were few. Be silent. Be careful. Keep your word when you can. And always take into account the chance that the other fellow may be holding a card under the table.

The President had proclaimed that an "unlimited national emergency" confronted us. An American ship was sunk in American waters by a German submarine. The German consulates were closed. Russia was invaded by the Nazis, pact or no pact. A representative of the Reich attended the funeral of the old German kaiser. This rather unimportant act made the present Germany very markedly Josiah's own personal enemy. The kaiser had been for him in the past a symbol of evil. He himself had fought the kaiser's armies. The present Germany went to

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his funeral—mourned his passing. Thus the war in Europe edged in a little further to Josiah's consciousness. But a man had to give his thought to one thing or the other.

He had moments of doubt as to whether he'd done the right thing, going against the President's wishes as he had, and refusing his candidate. But that couldn't be undone now and he must think of the best good of the Organization—play it safe. Josiah himself was safe enough for a while yet, and Josiah's associates. Any foot thrust into the doorway of their fastness would be dealt with in a manner beautifully final. Supposing they did experience another reverse at the polls? This didn't mean they were ready for the embalmer!

A number of incidents of that campaign merely ruffled the feathers of the opposition, like the teacher who appeared one afternoon at the mayor's headquarters followed by a brood of children she had brought there to study the cogs of government. Over the telephone—the busy campaign wires—she ordered them ice cream. Word of this created in Josiah's camp a welcome titter.

There was talk of keeping the draftees in the army beyond the original one-year intention. There was a great deal of talk. Perhaps people generally were getting tired of it. They didn't listen so much—not even to the President himself who had spoken of a certain sinking—spoken before the Congress and the Senate and only a small number of the legislators had remained to hear him out. He ought not to be treated so. It was in August that he had disappeared—various prominent officials being absent at the same time. An isolationist senator had bet his

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wife a quarter that he'd gone somewhere to meet the British prime minister and won his bet. There were more Atlantic sinkings and then a gradual growth of optimism—Hitler couldn't win.

But some people thought he could, and warned their fellow Americans to mind their manners. Cajole while there yet was time. Draw in your neck turtlewise. If not dismemberment impended, such people threatened. Especially they threatened the Jews. It was always easy to blame everything upon the Jews. A speech was made—an extraordinarily subversive speech—by an ex-hero who was still hero enough to some people to have had him talked about as presidential timber in 1940. This man hated the Jews and—by inference—the British a good deal more than he hated the Nazis. Of course the true appeaser, the true isolationist, didn't hate anyone—only killing for any reason whatsoever. The true appeaser lived by the spirit and in his view killing was never justified. Though he ate meat and wore shoe leather, Josiah noted. It was a considerable difference in degree, killing a steer and killing a man, however. Oh yes, the isolationists could hate as well as anyone else could—they were not markedly of peace-loving dispositions. Some of them were nice intellectuals, spiritually inclined, but not the great majority. A case in point was that labor leader of communistic leanings who still held out on the isolationist side even after Russia was invaded. He was not a peaceful man in any sense.

All these matters concerned Josiah only indirectly. But they did concern him. They wouldn't let him be himself. And it was as himself that he must continue to work day and night at his chosen task. And for all his

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confusion, he had a core of pride which held him firm. He would sit there to the end with his sleeves rolled up playing his game. It was the game he had chosen to play, though sometimes he felt like a kibitzer at a game which wasn't his at all. But he still could get anywhere he had to go—to the pearly gates if need be—if there were such gates.

At the end of September the appeasing ex-hero made a speech in which he pretended to fear that all elections would be discontinued. Josiah had moments when he regarded this as an idea possessing considerable merit but unlikely to happen. The man talked about free speech too, and how that would soon be stopped. There was no sign of such stopping. All public officials—including Josiah—were wide open to public criticism. Un-American was handy opprobrium being tossed about very freely and applied to anything the tosser himself didn't happen to like. There were other epithets. Josiah heard plenty of them. As the end of the campaign approached the attack on him personally didn't grow less violent. Robert Carrington who was not directly concerned came out with a few choice phrases. He called Josiah an ex-factory hand who didn't know enough to go home when the whistle blew. Evidently Paris's restraining influence on her husband was not as great as it had been once. She must have been too busy with her nursing.

In October Russia was still holding and agitating for a British invasion of the Continent. There was a conference on the final repeal of the Neutrality Act and some restrictions were removed on American ship movements. The destroyer "Kearney" was sunk in Icelandic waters. There were American forces in Iceland, and had been

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for some time. Tokio changed its cabinet to a less aggressive personnel, which might mean something and might not. It was an undeclared war—an undeclared naval war, the President said in his Navy Day address. It was an unlimited emergency. We were in it and yet out of it, as though seated in seats so close to the ring-side that we were liable at any moment to the impact of a hurled body—a body hurled or fallen.

More and more, events took charge, events outside Josiah's immediate activities and yet touching them quite vitally. It was in a devious way that his two preoccupations, the war and the Organization, ever met. So had Hitler and Mussolini met at the Brenner Pass—little said by the world at large, and yet they were there together. The war seemed closer all the time. Looking back, month by month you could see its progress. There were a number of committees, pacifist and appeasing, whose membership was shrinking visibly. All those nice intellectuals who lived by the spirit—in other words, the better element—were getting out. This left only the undesirables who'd done a good deal of damage to date and might do more—not as much, perhaps, as if they had been able to keep with them their more honest companions. These must be given credit for not having known with whom they had been teamed. This reminded Josiah of a remark the Big Fellow had let drop, speaking of the prison—"The trouble with this place is that it attracts the wrong kind of people—"

He had said this of the prison but he might have done so with equal truth of the isolationist committees. No, the honest members hadn't known the true purpose of their associates. Maybe they were finding out and worry-

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ing about the damage done—waking up in the night and worrying. Josiah hoped they were. Yet what had he himself contributed except negatively? He'd done no damage but he'd been no help. He had been a factor—not too slight—in the general indifference. And it was indifference more than it was damage which had produced this war which was for us still so nebulous.

Yes, Josiah's country had many faults—indifference was one. And there was a satisfied smugness hardly justified by the facts of the case. And more than anything, perhaps, national delusions of grandeur. We didn't need to be fortified against danger. We were so strong just in ourselves. It was useless to say now that if we had been so fortified the war would never have begun, nor spread itself like a sort of plague over great portions of the earth's surface. It might be lost that way but it would be won neither by indifference nor grandeur.

The election wasn't won. The mayor got in again. The margin was close. He was in for four years of hell, he said, and all congratulations should go to the defeated candidate. This was certainly one way of looking at it. Everyone concerned sat back and took a deep breath. Josiah welcomed the respite. He had worked hard and his heart had never been really engaged. He had felt too many times a carping, scratching doubt. Perhaps the man whom he had tried so to defeat was a better man than his own. Perhaps the President's candidate had been re-elected on his merits—his exceptional merits. But none of Josiah's associates would have accepted him, even had he himself been willing. And what would winning have profited them? In such case their troubles would have been all ahead of them instead of behind. Un-American,

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Josiah's enemies had said it was, going against the President's wishes. But no one could accuse Josiah of being un-American! He was as American as pork and beans or ham and eggs or a Sunday excursion up the Hudson.

The Organization wasn't the only machine which had lost the election. There was one in Boston, a Republican product—and not unconnected with Senator Eldridge—which had been defeated. Josiah thought of sending his old friend the Senator a telegram of condolence—just a thought, never translated into action. In New Jersey, where the machine was considered unbeatable, it hadn't done so well either. Perhaps those people who wanted to adjourn politics were right. But how would you go about it? Line up all the politicians and the bosses before a firing squad? Silence them in some other way a bit less drastic? As it was, the silence of the politician, including Josiah's, could never be mistaken for anything more enduring than a light nap.

There were more sinkings. Neutrality seemed out of the way at last. Final revisions were passed by the Senate—passed by events rather than by men. It didn't take much figuring now to be sure we were going to get into the war on our own account. Nobody could say just how or when—or if they could they wouldn't—but it was coming. Most people would be relieved. They would know where they stood anyway.

Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on a Sunday. The better the day the better the deed. On Monday war was declared. No, you couldn't say we hadn't been expecting it. But how it came was a surprise.

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And yet during these months that followed Josiah had a feeling that everything had happened before. There was so much seemingly new, and yet it wasn't new. There was no astonishment, no shock, no opening of doors into strange rooms. It was as if he himself had been immunized against change. He was aware of no motive, no direction. Or what there was of these was provided him from a source unknown. It was in this motiveless daze that he offered the Organization his resignation. It was not accepted. There wasn't anyone else, the group that had the power to accept it assured him. Perhaps head-hunting was a peace-time luxury. But the Big Fellow had told him the same thing in almost the same words—"there wasn't anyone else"—that day when Frank and Josiah had gone up to the prison and the old man had talked in large terms about a job which differed from the one Josiah was doing. And that was well before we had joined up officially with the war. It was gratifying to know from so many sources that "there wasn't anyone else."

In the whole country a kind of unity seemed to have been achieved. It might be a unity only temporary, but there was much talk of it and much satisfaction—also a conspicuous disintegration of all peace activities and a general pledging of support to what became known as the war effort. Those who had been quickest in their withdrawals became most vocal in their aid. Too vocal perhaps. The turmoil was like the loud sounds which astronomers affirm are caused by the earth's turning, and which human ears are not attuned to hear. There might still be trouble with the recalcitrant labor leader—he

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wasn't so easily shifted—but for the most part there was unity.

The British prime minister met the President again—this time in Washington. Some Americans still didn't like the British but it had to be recognized that their cause and ours was the same. The British Isles were like an old couple who had spawned in their time a number of children. The children were grown now and were leading their own separate lives. Even those children still called colonies were self-contained. But they all owed their parents a great deal—not only for the past but for the present—mostly for the present. They would pay that debt—saving their parents and themselves at the same time.

This country too had been a colony once. It had broken off, not alone through the suddenness of revolution, but by a gradual infiltration of races and people having nothing to do with the original English stock. The national entity so formed was as much theirs as it was Josiah's—a fact he was forced to admit. In private he admitted it grudgingly—in public with the fine large gesture characteristic of a man nourished by the vote. Well, it was better meeting in Washington, the two great men, than on a battleship on the high seas.

There were other meetings, in some ways closer to Josiah. Josiah junior came home for the Christmas holidays.

How much he looked like his Uncle Amos! It was the glasses he was wearing which brought the resemblance out.

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"You find you need glasses?"

"Yes, had my eyes examined—thought I better. Have a slight astigmatism. They're pretty fussy about eyes—the doctor said he didn't think they'd take me."

"They?"

"The Navy, or the Air Corps either. The Army's not so strict. I'll have no trouble there—particularly with what I know, or will know by June."

The boy's manner was perfectly casual, as though he had quite overlooked the fact that his father had been up to this moment uninformed of his plans. He went on:

"I'm carrying a couple of extra courses now—math, physics. The liberal arts won't get you very far in this man's war. Communications is the thing. Technical knowledge of some sort is a must."

Josiah was not really uninformed. He'd heard all this before. He had seen his son sitting here, his lank young frame oddly doubled up in the rather severely built colonial piece which in Flo's living room passed for a sofa. Part of the boy's face was in shadow, the light hitting it slantingly. Folded back in one strong hand was one of those pocket size journals that offer a digest of the month's news.

"I see," said Josiah. "Does your mother know?"

"Yes, I told her."

"What does she think?"

"Seems to think it's all right."

"The draft age is twenty-one."

"That'll be changed soon."

"It'll take a long time for Congress to catch up with itself that close!"

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"Maybe. But I hope you don't think I'm waiting till I'm tapped on the shoulder! You went in. didn't you, in the other war?"

"Yes."

"I mean you enlisted—you weren't drafted?"

"I enlisted. But I was older than you are now. And I was tougher."

"That's what you think! There are different kinds of toughness. Just because you worked in a shoe factory and lost a finger in the process, instead of going to a good school, you're rather inclined to take the position that you have a priority on all the manly virtues."

"The snobbery of poverty," Josiah ventured.

"I think you have something there. But to go on with what I started to say—"

"Oh by all means," said Josiah, "go on!" He liked to listen to his boy talk.

"Well, fellows like me who learned to wipe their noses on their handkerchiefs rather early in life and have done four years of Latin—minimum—would be just as bad to meet on a dark night—"

"Worse," said Josiah, playing up to it.

"It might be a little harder to kid us out of anything. Then there's Mother."

"What do you mean, then there's Mother?"

"You've always underestimated her, I don't know why. It's a complex you have about her. I admit she's limited and her values are a bit on the materialistic side. I gather that when she was young she didn't have any more advantages than you did."

"Rather less, if that were possible." Yes, Josiah thought to himself, decidedly less, but he certainly wasn't going

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to be drawn into a discussion of Flo's early disadvantages. "I think we might leave your mother out of this."

"Why should we? She's made up for her lack of early background to a degree quite extraordinary. Or don't you think so?"

"I give her all the credit in the world—"

"You should. She's quite a person. Oh I come of a good strain for toughness—you'd be surprised. Then who was that great grandfather, or was it great-great, who was in the China Trade? They didn't remain very long in the China Trade if they couldn't fight their own weight in wildcats. You see I know what to expect of myself, and why. I know what has happened in the world—or at least I have the outline. And it isn't because I've had a few years of school and a few months of college. It's because I've had a little time just when time was most important—because I could look into things without worrying about a pay envelope."

"That's what I always liked to do—look into things. I did so as soon as I could."

"Yes, but what you looked into. . . . Besides, it was a little late. Oh the war won't hurt me if I come through. And if I don't—well I don't. There'll be plenty of others to keep me company either way."

Josiah couldn't let the boy not come through. And yet what could he do about it? What he said was—"I'm afraid you're working too hard. These extra courses—it's a wonder the faculty let you take them—"

"I had to get permission naturally. My other marks had to be up to a certain standard—"

"Which they were, I presume?"

"Yes."

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"You always had a knack that way. Got it from your Uncle Amos, I guess."

"Or at least from the same source," the boy corrected. "He was hoping I'd be a writer."

"And you?"

"We'll talk about that some other time."

"Speaking of permission, you'll have to get mine to go into the Army—even in June."

"Yes, I know. I doubt that you'll withhold it."

"No," said Josiah, "that would be taking a good deal upon myself, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, wouldn't it? Anyway I promised Mother I'd take officer's training. She's very anxious I should."

"I can see that."

"I think I'll know enough—at least enough to learn what I have to learn. They'll need a lot of fellows like me—more than they can get of them."

"The war may be over before your training is."

"Not a chance! I'd go tomorrow if I thought that."

"Are you so set on going?"

"In one sense, definitely no. But in another—well I'd be pretty low, wouldn't I, to stick around hoping it would be over before I'd have to join up?"

Josiah didn't answer this, as it seemed unanswerable. He was rather proud of Josiah junior and June was still a long ways off. So Amos hoped he'd be a writer. Why not? Amos was always a great one for books. Writers sometimes did quite well for themselves. Though it was as far removed from any occupation suitable to Josiah senior as could possibly be conceived. The two—father and son—lapsed into silence now, as if they must both think over what had passed between them or at least go on to other

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matters which were not of a common concern. A curtain had temporarily been parted which was now drawn again. This parting had disclosed a figure which seemed to have but slight similarity to anything Josiah remembered of his son. The memory was sharp in him of an infant sleeping in a crib, of a child running rapidly on strong legs for the mere joy of running, a boy coming up out of the ocean to a beach of white sand—wet as a seal and with nothing to cover that bright and shining nakedness but the briefest of trunks. Josiah remembered the schoolboy comment on the strange secretary who was Paris Enderby. Closer memories were hazy—and now this. Some parents, he supposed, were led more gradually to the point where their offspring were no longer basically their children but mature creatures in their own right—able to tell them things—reversing the habitual processes.

This talk had happened many times, and yet it had never happened—not even now. No growth so normal and so perfect could be so willing to pit its perfection against any fate. "If I don't come through—well I don't—" Or words to that effect. The cost of bungling—long years of bungling. It would be Josiah himself and men like him who would carry the blame, and boys like Josiah junior who would save them from themselves. Josiah rose and went over to the boy and put his hand on his shoulder. He was wearing a jacket of a rough speckled tweed. Josiah could feel the roughness, the faint harshness of it, and—beneath—the strong bone and sinew.

"You're all right, son—you're all right."

Josiah junior turned from his perusal of the pocket

journal, a little surprised at the endearment. "Why thanks—"

"Oh no—never thanks."

Josiah went back to the chair from which he had risen. He so rarely obeyed his impulses that doing so—even having them in any great degree—made him uneasy. He couldn't settle to his reading as his son had no trouble doing to his. He crossed over to the radio and turned it on. There might be news. But for the moment it was just a commercial advertising a cigar. This was of no interest. It certainly could not crowd out the vista of questions which stretched into the future. There were so many he must sometimes ask. What, for instance, did the boy really think of war and peace, and could this last ever be guaranteed at all? What did he think of his Uncle Amos and Amos's way of life and Amos's wife who had a faint look about her of Paris Enderby? It would be pleasant in the years to come to talk of such things—if there were such years. There was this year at least.

19.

SOMEONE had to see to things at home. It seemed to Josiah that everyone who could board a train had gone to Washington. Carrington was there enough, back and forth. The mayor was there, though not so much as formerly, having been criticized rather severely for neglecting the duties of the office to which he had been reelected. He had made some sort of pre-election promise that he would now mind his knitting. The mayor wasn't such a bad sort, really, not when you got to know him, not when you weren't trying to defeat him. Carrington had something up his sleeve. He was being talked of as Republican presidential timber for '44. Well it was only '42 now.

Our navy seemed to be getting into the Japs a little, mostly through feats of the most extraordinary individual bravery. That was all right. That was what we were fighting for, wasn't it? Individual effort—individual bravery. Fighting to maintain. But whatever we were fighting for, we had to win the war. Josiah had no patience with those idealists who wanted to hold everything until they made up their minds about a lot of other issues which couldn't possibly arise for a long time—if ever. Of course there weren't very many of such people within the ranks of the Organization. Outside it they seemed to have quite a following. Meanwhile General

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MacArthur was defending the Philippines. And the Russians were—rather unexpectedly—holding out. Josiah had never liked the Russians but he had to admire them now. Communists they called themselves. It wasn't his idea of communists.

If it hadn't been for another election which was even now casting its shadow, Josiah would have been fairly comfortable. The insurance business had never been better and in the city there was a volunteer defense set-up to which Josiah was giving his wholehearted support. If he didn't know how to handle volunteer help, who did? The city might or might not be attacked—he didn't pretend to know—but to be ready for attack—and not bother the Army or the Navy with too many of your troubles—that was something to do.

In the middle of January some submarines were known to be very close to the Atlantic Coast line. There were those who claimed the city to be in mortal danger. Josiah didn't think so, but his aim was to keep it from any danger whatsoever. No mean aim and it would be, he was frank to say, a feather in the Organization's cap to have everything running smooth—a little smoother than it ran elsewhere. He worked doggedly to that end. As reward he was offered a commission in the army. Some desk job in Washington. He turned it down. He heard that such men were wearing typewriter ribbons—black and red—in lieu of service stripes. If it had been for front line fighting the temptation to accept would have been something from which he never could have been delivered. The Organization—his first loyalty—would in such case have had to shift for itself. But a desk in Washington was

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no temptation. He had a perfectly good desk where he was.

In February Singapore fell. A second A.E.F. landed in Northern Ireland. American troops showed up in Australia. MacArthur himself was ordered there, as the Philippines seemed doomed. Things didn't look too good. We could lose this war. We probably wouldn't—not in the long run—but we could. The R.A.F. blasted a munitions works in France, but it took more than one swallow to make a summer! Some of the Irish didn't take to the presence of troops so very kindly. This was a point upon which Josiah reserved comment. Bataan fell. There were rumors that the draft age was to be extended down to eighteen. Josiah junior would be nineteen in May, and after that he was all set for the final training which would turn him out—to his mother's pride—a second lieutenant. Josiah would have worried about him more than he did if he hadn't envied him so much. In April Tokio was bombed. Aside from the career of Josiah junior, this was the first bright spot. With April came the very self-evident—the painfully obvious—fact that Josiah senior had a duty to perform in regard to the following November.

He had been criticized in his conduct of his defense work. But he was hardened to this. He didn't mind it so much, being accused of everything from graft upwards. He'd done his job and done it well and the people who counted admitted it. He could take it. But taking suggestions about the coming election—the election of '42—was something else again. His natural tendency would have been to say, "To hell with it!" and go on with the work at hand. But he couldn't do this. Wasn't he

still the Organization Boss? Wasn't he still the Chairman of the state Democratic committee? He was also head of the Democratic county committee. In fact he seemed still to hold every office which had ever been thrust on him. The thought of his own merely titular importance rather appalled him.

"You ought to be thinking of a candidate, Joe—governorship coming up."

"Have you any one in view, Joe?"

"The governor's a pretty important office."

"The man in there now absolutely refuses to run again—"

"We've got to get someone—"

"Why don't you get your aunt's cat?"

"That's an idea! I knew a woman once—"

"I bet you did—"

"Who had a nice black tom cat—good mouser, too."

"Good ratter, you mean—"

"Cats don't go for rats—"

"The big ones do—"

It wasn't a joke. It had to be decided. And Josiah was in no mood to come to a decision. When he thought of facing it some defensive mechanism, some gadget of his brain, suddenly began to click like an automatic sprinkler when the temperature reaches a certain degree of heat. But he was still responsible to the Organization. Why hadn't he been permitted to resign when he'd wanted to? That would have solved everything. No, not everything. It was his position which gave him a chance to do a great many things he wanted to do. You had to take the bad

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with the good. The Organization hadn't been doing so well lately. Why the very building in which its activities were housed couldn't meet its expenses! There was talk of sale. But a finance committee came to the rescue and the talk blew over.

And then the administration stepped in again—the Administration in Washington. They had a man for governor all picked out. It was a Democratic congressman by the name of Strictland whom at one time the Organization had supported. Josiah knew the man and had never thought too highly of him. In fact he had taken a dislike to him—quite violent—on the occasion of their first meeting.

Josiah was accustomed to being treated with respect by Democratic congressmen—particularly those from his own state. The reasons for such treatment were obvious, but Congressman Strictland had evidently not taken them sufficiently into account.

"Oh," he had said, acknowledging the meeting, "so you're Joe Madden, the Yankee wonder!"

"I know I'm a Yankee. I never heard that I was a wonder." The tone should have warned Strictland but it didn't.

"Don't be so modest. Yes, you are—a wonder. You don't drink—you don't smoke. You don't chase women. I don't even fancy that you go fishing."

"I would if I wanted to," said Josiah.

"That's rather beside the point, isn't it?"

"Is it? I wouldn't know." For no good reason Josiah was getting madder by the minute.

Strictland went on devilling him. "Do you mean to say that there's anything the Boss doesn't know?"

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"Plenty of things, I'm afraid."

Strickland looked at him. "What do you do in your spare time, Mr. Madden?"

This was the kind of approach Strickland made to people of prominence. Often they didn't mind. It was a sort of a trademark with him and he was in the habit of getting away with it. With Josiah it just happened that he didn't.

"Usually, in my spare time," Josiah replied in that slow Yankee drawl of his, "I do a little fancy work—afghans mostly."

The words on both sides had been exceedingly innocent. The manner was not. Strickland was rather brilliant—his record was such—and a little bemused by his own brilliance. Things had always come to him too easily. He had a reputation that way. Realizing his initial mistake with Josiah, he had tried to retrieve himself in subsequent contacts but without success. Josiah admitted him clever. "He might be useful as a trouble-shooter somewhere around the equator—the diplomatic corps might get to use him." Which was an odd thing for Josiah to have said of him, considering the man's lack of diplomacy in regard to himself.

Some of the other Organization leaders seemed to think Strickland would be all right. He was young. He was in with the new crowd.

"I'll say."

Josiah thought the mayor was radical, and Carrington. But this one beat them both. For years he'd been very much on the left wing of the President's reforms—housing schemes—WPA—unemployment insurance. It was only in comparatively recent times that such men had

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got into politics at all. Let a few of them into Congress if you had to, but don't let them into the State Capitol! There wasn't any reason to. What was the use of being the big Boss if you couldn't turn thumbs down once in a while? Just on your own, that is to say, just because you yourself didn't want a candidate. Why even lawyers—and all these men were lawyers—were permitted a certain number of blank rejections when it came to picking a jury. There were twelve men in a jury. In the governor's office there was only one. What if people did listen to Strictland, and vote for him, doubtless? Josiah didn't trust him. He trusted him less than he did Carrington and far less than he did the mayor. The President was a great man, a very great man in his own field, with a sort of mighty strength, positive and rare, but the trouble with the President was that his trust in human nature was far too abiding. He didn't see the tricky side of some of the men who surrounded him and made up to him. He took them far too much at their face value. And he was always too greatly intrigued by the evangelist. One part of the world was going evangelical while the other was fighting for its life with guns and tanks and every kind of death-dealing appliance. No, there wasn't any reason why Arthur Strictland should be governor, and Josiah refused to lend his services to any such project. Not even if it involved going against the Administration for a second time.

He didn't like sniping. He wasn't a Republican. Republicans took the stand that in a democracy there must be a party ever criticizing, ever interfering with the party federally in power. But again, this was a local and personal issue. So again he had a nice little private war

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on his hands—even more private than the previous one—because this time he was without the support of the other Organization leaders. They could go straight to, for all of him. He'd have harmony in his own Organization even if he had to fight for it! His war wasn't really so very private—not with the radio so conveniently located. Josiah hated public speaking, but the microphone didn't bother him. He could be quiet, he didn't have to raise his voice. His work in civilian defense gave him a number of chances to speak over the networks, and without apparent political intent. It was a little early yet for politics, or would seem so to the general public. But he could talk at any time against the Republicans. And it was extremely important that the Republicans be defeated nationally the following fall.

If they were to obtain control of the Lower House there would be the devil to pay. The period of unity had been all too brief, and now the Republicans were back again at their old tricks, not supporting the President's policies as they should. All these men seemed interested only in their own aggrandizement. But you couldn't have a group of men such as these for the most part were, all collected in one spot, and expect them to get along without friction. The rugged individualist—that had been a popular term a few years back. It still held. Such men had got where they had because they were rugged and individualists. What could you expect of them now? To take orders from each other?

Josiah himself wasn't taking orders any more or having a candidate he didn't want thrust down his throat. But he had to get one of his own, and who? The time grew short and he didn't have any.

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"Why don't you go up and see the old man about it?"

This was a suggestion anyway, and just as a matter of form Josiah went. It was a visit in any case long overdue. They called him the old man now, not the Boss or the Big Fellow, but they still called him—spoke of him and even listened to him when they didn't have anyone else to whom to listen. No one had ever thought he'd be in prison so long, but the parole board had consistently turned him down—which was probably Carrington's doing—and he still had a year or so left of his full term, even with time off for good behavior. One thing was sure. The old man wouldn't throw what little trace of influence he still possessed to this congressman of whom he probably had never heard.

He'd heard of him all right. "Strictland? Arthur Strictland? Oh yes, very able man. I understand there's been some talk of putting him up for governor."

You still had to get up pretty early to get ahead of the old man.

"You'd favor it?"

"Well I'm not in a position to favor anything. But just between you and me, I think you could build up considerable support for a man like that."

"He'd be hard to handle."

"Oh you'd have to let him go his own gait. It's a case where the character of the man might compel the Party to fall in. We've put up men before we didn't personally care too much for—and had pretty good luck with some of them, too. Just lately we've been sustaining some pretty consistent losses. We can't afford many more."

"But if we could win without him?"

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"Well there's no real reason why we couldn't, I suppose. . . . I understand our finances are not in such good shape. We've grown so particular about the sources of any backing it might be hard for us to swing an election unless we had the right candidate."

"And you think Strictland would be right?"

"I suppose you came up here to hear me say that I don't."

"Maybe."

"That's what people generally want when they ask advice—they want to be backed up. Frankly, I'm not very much interested. I've been doing considerable welfare work here among the boys, and it takes most of my time. Working in close cooperation with the warden—"

"I wouldn't doubt it," said Josiah.

"I'm sorry I can't give you a more satisfactory opinion."

"Oh that's all right—"

"Don't forget, you're the Boss now. I feel flattered that you bothered to come and ask me about it. There must have been a good deal of pressure brought to bear against your view."

"Oh I wouldn't say that exactly—"

Josiah didn't stay long. It was plain enough that the old man wanted Strictland if he wanted anybody. Josiah had been disappointed in the Big Fellow before. He was more so now. He wouldn't go to see him again—nothing gained. The former chief didn't need visitors. Josiah's report of the interview was truthful as far as it went. The old man hadn't given any definite word and had admitted himself not very much interested in such matters. He seemed wholly occupied with the good of his fellow

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prisoners and obviously not too much concerned with the good of the Organization.

"He's nuts about welfare work—you can go up and find out for yourselves if you want to—" But Josiah knew, as he spoke, that no one would.

It wasn't so easy as that regarding Arthur Strictland. Josiah still had quite a fight on his hands. Strictland announced that he was tossing his hat in the ring and boasted the President's personal support. Josiah couldn't see what good he'd do the President as governor. He would be much more useful staying where he was. God knows they were short of competent congressmen in Washington, and the man was competent.

The present governor—he who refused to run again—endorsed him too. Everyone did except Josiah. Josiah held, standing out against him. Matters had reached a point where to have given in would have been an admission of subjection. And he would find someone.

It was said he got Frank Braddock because Frank was the only man at all available who was capable of financing his own campaign. There might have been an element of truth in this but it wasn't true altogether. He got Frank from multiple motives. He liked Frank. He got along with him. Frank took orders. You knew where you were with him. He'd been defeated for the City Council a couple of years before, but there were reasons there. There was the fact that Josiah had been giving most of his time to campaigning for the President. This was one reason. Proportional Representation in the election of the Council was another. This last was always difficult.

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Besides, Frank himself hadn't been too enthusiastic. With the governorship as prize things would be different. Frank would cooperate. He was no rugged individualist. He hadn't got where he was entirely through his own efforts anyway. It was Frank's grandfather who had been the tough one and made a fortune in the contracting business. It was a fortune to which Frank's father had been sole heir. The grandmother was in bad health and had therefore not given birth to the typically numerous family. As a lawyer Frank's father had done well, and again—by the merest chance—the small family.

It was an uphill fight to get the Organization to accept Frank—comparatively unknown as he was politically—but it was a fight Josiah had to make if only for the good of his own soul. He'd had power for a long time now and he'd never really used it—not alone—by himself—standing out against everyone. Power was in the air, for good and for evil. Then something happened which made it absolutely necessary for Josiah to have things his own way—even more so than it had been before. He had known for months that Carrington had something up his sleeve. But he had thought it something which was two years off. It wasn't. It was just around the corner. It was in May that Carrington was endorsed by the Republican Party as the rival candidate. Josiah drew a long breath, took leave of absence from his defense work, and came out fighting. That was what the referee in the prize ring told the contestants to do when the gong sounded.

The state convention was in August. Josiah set the date and made his committee agree to it—agree to everything. It wouldn't be a convention like the one in Chicago with Josiah and all the other bosses merely window

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dressings. Josiah would be the chief here, his position—his various positions—entitling him to the rank. He got a line-up of pledged votes which looked good—not quite good enough perhaps, but good. Frank was still not acceptable to some elements in the Party—even in the Organization itself he wasn't acceptable. And there were a great many Democrats outside the Organization—the liberal group—who wouldn't have anything to do with him. It was his record as a lawyer which was mostly against him. You could call him a corporation lawyer if you wanted to, which was almost the worst thing you could say politically about anyone. He'd worked for some of the big trust companies and was not unknown in financial circles. Labor didn't like him any too well. Labor threatened to put up a candidate of their own with whom they could hardly expect to win, but they could gum the works. It was quite a battle even at the state convention. What kind of a battle it would turn into when Election Day dawned couldn't be foretold. And the time in between—nearly three months—were three gruelling months.

Josiah might have been easier fighting Japs in some South Pacific atoll than he was here in this great crowded room which harbored over a thousand delegates who were most of them just as tense as he was himself. He imposed his will somehow. His man received the nomination. And there Frank Braddock was in the flesh, in person, with Mrs. Braddock and the two eldest of the five children—all fine upstanding good-looking citizens of the U.S.A. You knew all about them, just to see them.

Flo was here too. You didn't know all about Flo but this didn't matter now. It was "Mrs. Madden" this and

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"Mrs. Madden" that. Josiah had been too busy to realize quite how much Flo had come into her own at last. She'd been changing, of course, for some time. Those changes had been noted. But it was evidently the chances of war which had brought the transformation so completely to the surface. He remembered what the boy had said of her—that she was quite a person. Possibly she was, and he at fault in not having appreciated the fact more fully. The women who worked with her on her committees and her drives, who valued her opinion on early glass and the rolling of a bandage, would have been intensely surprised to learn that she had been a waitress at the Lindsay House and all which this included. They wouldn't have believed it. They wouldn't have to. There was no one to tell them.

"Well Joe, you put it across, didn't you?"

"I seem to. And you'll find out it was the best thing."

"I hope you're right."

"We can't lose—"

"We've got some pretty tough competition."

"We'd have had that anyway."

"I have to hand it to you, Joe! You've laid your shirt right on the table!"

"Are you inferring I'll lose it?"

"I hope not—I hope not indeed. It'll be a light vote."

"That's to our advantage, isn't it?"

"Would be in normal times—"

"The way some of you fellows talk you'd think it was the first war we'd ever been in!"

"No, not exactly, but it's something extra special as

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wars go. You get used to following the news on one side of the globe and then you have to turn around and listen to something going on on the other. I remember the first three-ring circus I ever saw—affected me the same way—didn't get to enjoy any of it."

"There's one thing about it," said Josiah, "you can always find good news mixed up with the bad."

"We'll need plenty of good news before we're through. I wonder if this raid on Dieppe is the second front the Russians are always yelling for or only one of those Commando—"

"Raid on Dieppe?"

"Yes, it was on the air tonight."

"Too busy to tune in—"

"I guess you were. Some of our fellows and the Canadians and the British were there with tanks and planes and guns—barges—warships—quite a party—"

"That's where we ought to be," said Josiah, "instead of here."

"Lop off twenty years and we would be. How's your boy?"

"He's in camp. He's doing fine—just fine—smart kid."

"That's what they're looking for. Smart kids—smart American kids."

"They can pick up training as easy as shelling peas. How are yours?"

"My girl's out in Des Moines with the Waacs studying to be an officer. My boy's on a sub-chaser."

"Well, that's the way things are."

"Yes, that's the way things are. And we've got to forget all that if we can. We've got to concentrate on something else—put your man in. I guess we can do it—I

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guess we can. If we can't it'll be too bad. Carrington's too risky."

"Strickland would have been just as risky."

"Except that he's a Democrat."

"There's less excuse for him, being a Democrat."

"I see what you mean."

"We want security," Josiah said. "On the home front at least. With men like that you can't tell what they're up to."

The other man turned away. "I sometimes wonder." And then, turning back for a moment: "Public opinion seems to support them."

When Josiah spoke he lowered his voice. "I'm getting so damn sick of public opinion."

"But you have to cater to it, don't you?"

"That's what I mean—I'm sick of catering to it."

"You're tired, Joe, you ought to go home and get a good night's rest."

Public opinion. . . . Wasn't the opinion of the public the hook on which Josiah's whole life had hung? And catering to it, or at least seeming to, and bending it this way and that to his own will and his own advantage? Now he felt suddenly as though he were sailing from a known to an unknown shore. But wasn't this too what he'd been doing right along? If you wanted power you had to get it from somewhere. You didn't just pick it up out of the air like a radio picking up wave lengths.

The Coral Sea—Midway—the Solomons. Were there any cannibal chiefs left in the Solomons? And if there were what would they be thinking of the goings on?

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They must long for the good old peaceful days of private feuds and missionary stew. Or had the missionaries won their point so long ago that this last delicacy was forgotten? The Solomons were a long ways off, well outside of Josiah's own sphere, which was hardly global. Six of the eight saboteurs who had arrived on our shores via submarine had been put to death. That was nearer. And again in foreign parts, the Russians were killing Germans with a lavish hand. You certainly had to give the Russians credit, whatever you thought of them. They were tough both in body and spirit. They were a good deal tougher than the Germans were who were merely hard-boiled. The Germans weren't feeling quite so good as they had been. The fighting in the Egyptian desert seemed to be going better. A three-ring circus? Even that would hardly contain the measure of events. So much had happened and went on happening. There was no doubt that such matters had a bearing on the kind of men who were going to be elected.

There was an uncertainty in the air. Everyone felt that by November a state of mind and circumstance now unforeseen might decide the issue. More than anything a big military success would help the Democrats. But it was hard to see how this could happen before November. Things were going a little better but not well enough. It was still said that we could lose the war and there were people—quite a number of these—who maintained the attitude that it was the Democratic Party who had got us into it. These were the people who thought you could hibernate, or bury yourself in some other way beneath the ground, and so keep out of trouble forever. What would you find when you emerged? There was

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considerable shifting of ranks. Some Democrats turned Republican and some Republicans came over to the Democrats. The men who led the Republicans were not typical—not as a group—neither fish, flesh, fowl nor even good red herring. As for those who led the Democrats, Josiah would have liked to think that he himself was typical.

There was much said by the opposition of the Democratic process and the need of criticism where criticism was due. You would almost think it an election to recall the President from office. Which it wasn't. There was another even more fantastic view, locally, that is. There was a feeling that locally it was a fight between the President and Josiah to gain control of the state Democratic organization. Josiah wasn't responsible for this notion. In fact, how anyone had figured it out he didn't know. Because that fight seemed over. Josiah was perfectly willing to stand by the President on all major issues—certainly all federal ones. And he wasn't fighting him about anything now—anything at all. He'd picked his own candidate and held no grudges. Then there was that other idea which was always cropping up. It had reared its foolish head a year ago. If the Democrats lost locally, the Organization and the whole state party in this particular case would find the undertaker outside the door waiting to pick up the pieces. And this wasn't true. Nothing was really true. You functioned in a bath of doubt. You could always deny. It was harder to affirm.

Carrington was very strong in the city. People didn't seem to like him quite so well up state. He was a little too slick for the farmer's taste. Yet the general opinion was that he would win unless, between now and November,

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he happened to get careless and murder his grandmother. But Josiah didn't think he had a living grandmother—not here anyway. He had a mother who was Italian. But that Italian issue was dead duck. There were too many good Italians who were citizens of this country. And as citizens they had a vote.

U. S. Army bombers were raiding shipyards and munitions plants in Europe. In September the United States had more than half a million fighting men outside the country. American forces landed in the Aleutians. It was in October that the great Allied offensive came along the forty mile Egyptian front. All these matters were in action while Josiah was still struggling with his election. He'd laid his shirt on the table. He might lose it. He knew that he stood a good chance of losing it—a better than even chance. Though he kept such knowledge strictly to himself. What he hadn't figured—and it came over him all at once on election night—was just what such a loss would mean. But man was born to trouble, and the catch in it was that the sparks flying upward could not again be used for fuel.

20.

‘GOOD night, Pat.’

“Good night, Mr. Madden.”

Josiah wondered why the taxi didn’t start. But how could it with Pat still holding the door open?

It must have been as strange to Pat as it was to him that he was leaving the Club by himself without at least a pair of the many close associates who normally would have been pushing their way into any conveyance he might have been taking. But a man such as Pat didn’t have an imagination geared to the reception of sudden changes. This was why he was a Club attendant. Though in his fine gold braid he looked like an admiral of the fleet. But you couldn’t always go by looks. Here was Josiah himself with all the earmarks of success still strong upon him, and he wasn’t what he looked like any more than Pat was—not now. Yet he had been successful at this same hour last night and early this morning and even at noon today. Now his success had vanished. He was just as much through as any bum sitting on a park bench with a newspaper over his head to keep off the rain.

“That’s all!” he said, speaking more brusquely than he was in the habit of speaking to employees of the Ardsley Club or to anyone else who had a vote.

But he came by his brusqueness honestly. It was a Yankee characteristic. He had tried to train himself out

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of it. But now it didn't matter any more. In this hour of his colossal failure he could re-emerge as he really was.

Ordinarily, losing an election wasn't so important. The Party had survived a number of such losses and would survive this one. But it was rare that the whole blame could be placed on any one's shoulders as squarely as it could be placed on Josiah's. The papers would carry Frank Braddock's name as the defeated candidate, but Josiah was the real loser. What had Frank lost except some money? And even this might bring down his income tax some way or another. In any case the money was more than offset by the value of the publicity Frank had received. It wouldn't do his law business any damage, his running for governor of the state. His previous political activities having been minor, most people had never heard of Frank before, and now they had. In fact Josiah suspected that the defeated candidate wasn't too surprised at the way things had turned out and had been willing to give so freely of his time and fortune just for the ride. Frank was all right. In another sense he would have been all right if things had turned out differently. He wasn't a dangerous liberal like Strickland, who everyone was now saying would have won the election. Frank would have done what he was told. He could have been handled.

Who was going to handle Carrington? That tricky little—! God, how Josiah hated him! Of course he had a lot of reasons for hate—personal and private reasons entirely apart from politics. But it came to him, sitting here in the taxi by himself, that even his hatred didn't matter now. He had a name. He was the Party chief—at least in the state. But now all his titles and all his honors

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—chairman of this and chief of that—had about the value of labels on an empty bottle. The party wouldn't want him any more. The Organization wouldn't want him. He would be cast out. What was the place of which the Big Fellow had once talked? It was a place called Limbo occupied by the lightly damned and those who awaited judgment. He didn't have to wait for any judgment, so even this would be no suitable haven. He would be cast out like a soul cast out of hell and with nowhere to go but outer space. And he had worked so hard. He was too tired to consider going anywhere.

He had thought in his early days that public opinion could be molded. He had fancied himself as the sculptor. Public opinion was molded by events, and sometimes events were very strong. This was one of the times.

What was there about war that set its mark on the great moments of Josiah's life? He had gone into politics at the end of one war and was certainly on his way out of them at an as yet undisclosed period of another. He remembered so well that bleak day in April, marching in review with his Yankee division before the great of New England. It was then that he had first considered politics as a career. He remembered his father whom physically he so strongly resembled. They were both tall and lank, the extra bony structure taking the place of flesh. Why now, here in the taxi, he was sitting as his father had so often sat, resting almost on the small of his back and one long leg crossed over the other. His father had been a failure too.

Through all this thought and memory there was one sound he kept hearing. It was the ringing of the bell in the church of his boyhood town. It was rung on Sun-

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days in praise of the Lord. There was a song popular now—"Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition." Josiah had never had much time for that—not for the first, anyway. The bell was rung for funerals too—his father's, his mother's, Judge Anders' and the funeral of old Henry Vliet at which he had been an honorary pall bearer. No, he was wrong there. Vliet's funeral had taken place here in the city.

The sound of the bell echoed in his ears. He became aware that it wasn't an echo merely. Across the Square there was a big clock and it was striking. Any clock struck as long at midnight as it did at noon. He'd caught up with himself at last, right around time itself. The governors of five states. . . . He had seen himself as the player at the little chessboard moving these figures here and there. What were they called? He didn't play chess, so he wasn't sure. Pawns and knights and kings and queens and castles? In any case it had proved a smaller occupation than he had thought. He himself had been one of a number of men sitting around a table in a back room—and not Perley's back room either! But his concentration had been so complete that he hadn't noticed that the game had changed to something he didn't understand. This was why he'd lost his shirt.

He'd been loyal. He'd been regular. The kind of people who didn't give their trust too easily usually trusted him. And he had been so willing—even so avid—to learn. But there was a limit to his capacity for learning. Wasn't it Judge Anders who had intimated this to him more than once? And his friend that Jewish dentist had often wondered about what he was up to. There must be a limit to any learning. And now he had come up against this

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limit very flat. Of what good any more was his Yankee shrewdness, the unsparing tenacity of his purpose? He had been important. He had been powerful. But the men coming into power now were of a different stripe. They were dangerous in their power, or seemed so to Josiah who wasn't ordinarily afraid of danger. Strictland was dangerous, so was Carrington, so was the mayor. So was the President in his own way. Such men didn't take orders. They didn't do only what they were told to do. Well neither had Josiah! Had he been trying to imitate such men without knowing how?

"Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition—" Maybe if Josiah had praised the Lord more often he would have done better. As for passing the ammunition, perhaps it was the smoke from this and not from a thousand cigars which had so choked him in the crowded rooms of the Club. Whatever it was, it was a stench from which he had hastened to escape. He had hastened unduly, leaving behind him a small brief-case filled with irreplaceable documents—names—records—the sort of papers you couldn't leave at large. Discovering his loss, he realized he had to return. It wouldn't do to have such things fall into the wrong hands—especially as matters stood. He directed the taxi driver to go back to the Club. He had probably left the case in the little anteroom where he had put on his coat.

Yes, this was just where he had left it but curiously he let it lie on top of the green steel filing case where someone had placed it. It didn't seem important any more, save as a cause for his own return. In the anteroom along with the brief-case he encountered Paris. Paris was such an odd name for a woman. He had always thought it odd.

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Up to this moment he hadn't seen Paris—not to speak to—for a number of years. The years hadn't changed her essentially. Her gray eyes were matched now by a streak of gray in her hair. Some women would have dyed it but not Paris. She had always let her looks shift for themselves. Josiah never remembered having seen her gazing at herself in a mirror, and it would have been for her such a rewarding occupation. Women were so often either fat or puny. She was neither of these, but tall and strong and a little lank—chiselled without being hard—clear without being sharp. To Josiah at least she was still in every way remarkable. They ought never to have parted—not for a moment. She might have proved his salvation as Flo—in spite of everything—could never do. His realization of the wonder of her was why it didn't strike him at first how remarkable it was, her being at the Ardsley Club—particularly on this night and at this hour.

She had the air of someone who had arrived in a great hurry and for a purpose of importance. She was hatless and a little breathless, and her unscathed poise was translated to the terms by which you might describe a ship's figurehead or a huntress come to stillness in the midst of the chase. During the moment which passed before she spoke or before he greeted her Josiah wondered if it really were Paris. Sometimes when people were as tired as he was they had hallucinations. He felt the same tingling shock to which he would have been subject had his mother suddenly stood before him. His mother was dead. Paris wasn't dead. From her plain black dress to the coat of some rough woolen material which was flung

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over her shoulders there was about her none of the anomaly usual to magic.

"Joe," she was saying to him, "Joe Madden!" and looking at him with those gray eyes of eyes that missed nothing. "I had to see you—I knew you'd be here—"

"Has something happened?"

"Happened?"

"Are you in trouble?" He had often been guilty of hoping she would be in some trouble or other and come to him for rescue.

"No Joe, no. But you are and I came to tell you that you mustn't mind too much."

He looked down at her then—not far down, just a little down. She had evidently forgotten that in the past she had always called him by his full name. "Joe" was for peanut politicians and ward heelers and people who slapped you on the back when you were up and on the face when you were down. But this wasn't the past. This was the present.

"Mind?" he lied to her, "why should I mind? I've always been able to take punishment. And as you go up the punishment gets tougher. In my business you take orders or you give them, and I guess I'm out of the way of taking them."

This explained a great deal but it proved nothing save a sort of small implacability. No successful Yankee ever took orders with grace. His luck must lie in a line of endeavor where this wasn't something he would ever be called upon to do. Josiah could admit this finally—indirectly.

"If it hadn't been for my pig-headedness," he said,

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"Carrington might not have been elected, and if that was what you wanted—well—that's something—"

It might have been thought, the way he spoke, that he was trying to obtain credit for himself, pointing out the fact that it was he who had made Paris a priceless gift. But this wasn't what he was doing. He was trying to confess his sins. And what better time for this than with Paris beside him cutting off his speech at last by her hand on his coat sleeve?

"I suppose you've come here to thank me?" he brought out finally. What else could she have come for? Not to crow over him certainly!

"I would never thank you for something you didn't intend," she answered him.

"Then it was doubly kind—"

After all the important thing was not why she had come here on this night of his defeat but the fact itself. He had been licking his own wounds he knew, but the balm of her presence was a better cure. This talk between them was merely on the surface. This was the way it had been when they had first known each other. Any penetration of their words to the depths of their feeling, so mutual and so astounding, had been arrived at only at the great and climacteric period of their intimacy. It was now almost as if they were back again at the beginning. But they would hardly have the grace now to retrace that golden path.

Josiah remembered so well the first time he had ever seen her. She had entered his private office in response to his bell and must have been standing there for several

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seconds before he'd looked up from his desk expecting merely the plain and competent presence of Nellie Finch. He had probably stared, and Paris had stared back at him giving him as good as he gave.

Most women were a little afraid of Josiah. It was an instinctive fear, as if they knew their softer bodies possessed no likely weapon against his harsher strength and they divined how careless he might be of this. They needn't have bothered, mostly. He always thought women had an exaggerated opinion of their consequence. Even a woman like Nellie Finch, invaluable aid that she had been, was not indispensable. And there was Flo, who had at times a kind of smugness, and she hadn't been an aid—not to Josiah. He had got himself involved with Flo, and permitting himself such involvement was to him an error worse than any sin the act might include. Josiah Madden was always thought to be a calculating man and yet it seemed to him that he was always paying too great a price for the merchandise of his living. He had married Flo—that was a price—and if he hadn't married Flo he might have been free to marry Paris when he could have done so before she married Carrington, who was free as all get-out! And now Carrington had won the election.

It was to Josiah a small, cold satisfaction to take it for granted that the man probably didn't know Paris was here at the Ardsley Club giving aid and comfort to the enemy. He would be much too absorbed in his own triumph to know anything outside it. Right after Braddock had conceded the election Carrington's voice had come over the radio. Such a quiet modest voice it had become. So bland, so smooth. He urged everyone to forget all

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party rivalries—naturally, any successful candidate urged that—and said how they must all work together for winning the war. That too. . . .

Josiah felt that his own patriotism was second to none. In fact it was Carrington's party, not his, that still carried any residue of pacifism or isolationism. It was a pretty heavy burden for even Carrington to live down. Why, back—way back—in the campaign of '20, the Republicans had been promising every immunity to the Germans and trying to placate the Irish! Though no one accused Carrington of anything like that. He wasn't old enough for '20. He hadn't been quite old enough to fight in the last war. And now he was as modern as the newest engine on the newest bomber. The past had no meaning for him except as a record of error to be avoided. It was even a wonder he had regarded the old institution of marriage sufficiently well to have availed himself of it. He would doubtless not have done so except for Paris. And here Paris was with her hand on Josiah's coat sleeve.

He half-expected her to be carrying a stenographer's note book, as she had at their first meeting, and to be explaining to him now as she had done before that Miss Finch was out to lunch. That first meeting and this last were all confused in Josiah's mind.

Old man Enderby, Paris's father, had been a big man in city traction. There had been some scandal about that and at the moment Enderby's influence had been valuable. Any little favor the Organization could do him. . . . He had asked that his daughter be given a job. It was such a small favor and so easily granted that Josiah had forgotten all about it. Fancy forgetting! Her being Enderby's daughter had accounted for a good deal—at least

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for the shoes Josiah had immediately noticed she was wearing. They were strictly handmade, and of the grade known in the trade as "bespoke." They must have cost about forty dollars. Josiah always noticed shoes, having spent the most impressionable years of his life in a shoe factory. But he had never liked machines. It was through people he had got along. Right up to now he had got along that way from the time when his wages had supplemented the money his mother had made by taking in people's washing, up to this very moment.

Paris Enderby had never worked in a factory. She had no missing finger. The one which corresponded to Josiah's own lack was graced by a curious ring. Josiah had never seen one like it before he had seen its owner in that first hour of their meeting. It was at a time subsequent to this that she had told him how the stone which was a scarab had been discovered in some pharaoh's tomb. Paris's great-uncle had been an archeologist. The shoes and the ring and the gray eyes which met his without fear or favor. . . . "My father got me the job here," Paris had told him at once, and this hadn't been at all what Josiah himself would have admitted. And yet he couldn't very well have defended to her his act in having done her father a favor. She had told him a number of things during that first meeting which, had it not been for Paris being exactly as she was, might have made him regret the favor he had granted the traction magnate so carelessly.

But Paris, the fruit of his carelessness—the carelessness of a calculating man—was the circumstance in Josiah's life never to be regretted. He felt towards her now as he had felt at the beginning. A cold and calculating man Josiah was, and capable of this long loyalty and this com-

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plete devotion. It surprised even him, thinking about it as he so often did. "All for love and the world well lost—" But the world was lost anyway—at least his world was. For him the bell had tolled as clearly as the old bell in the church steeple of his boyhood. Was there anything left to lose? Paris was here with him now. Why should he let her go? He was strong, he was capable, he could look out for her wherever their joint fortunes might lead.

There was a back way out through the Club's basement. Sometimes people who didn't want to be seen made use of it. They were alone. It could be taken almost for granted that no one had seen them together or seen Paris come in or recognized her if they had. If Paris and Josiah went away together it would be an entirely workable solution of Josiah's remaining days on earth. He had married his wife because he had been afraid of what people might say, and he had done his duty by her always. Flo would be all right. She would be well fixed. Other women had survived the disappearance of their husbands. As for Carrington, he owed nothing to Carrington. The whole preposterous scheme was preposterous only because Josiah was quite sure that Paris wouldn't consider it for a moment. But thinking about it made Josiah feel better—restored him to some degree of the man he had been before the voting machines which clicked off the votes had begun to hold within their steely computations more and more of the record of his failure.

"I just was wondering," Paris said, "what you're going to do now?"

"I really hadn't given it much thought."

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"No, of course you haven't. There hasn't been time."

"Don't you think I've done enough—for the present, anyway?"

"And what have you done?" Paris asked him.

Josiah found himself smiling, not so much at her as at himself. "Nothing—except being the kind of man I am, I suppose. Everything else has changed and I haven't."

"Well if you know that—really know it—at least you've made a beginning," she smiled back at him.

He picked up the brief-case for which he had come back. "I thought I was through with beginnings but I guess I was wrong. It's about time for me to take stock of myself, isn't it?"

"That depends on your reason for taking stock of yourself."

Josiah was still smiling his peculiar tight-lipped smile. "Does one have to have a reason?"

"Usually. But as long as you don't do it because you're trying to justify your mistakes—"

"I gave up doing that long ago," Josiah said hastily. "I used to think I was important and I guess I was, but now that I'm not important any more I better figure on something else."

"I see what you mean," said Paris.

She ought not to have agreed with his estimate of himself quite so readily, because for whatever reason she had come here to find him it was surely not to berate him. It was perfectly true that he had been important once—or at least powerful. But the men coming into power now were of a different stripe and possibly they weren't important either—not in themselves. But they played a

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game where the stakes were higher than any game Josiah had ever played. And perhaps they understood as Josiah didn't this marrow in democracy which bore in its vitals a virtue other than the chance it offered to the exceptional. Josiah was perfectly willing to grant them such knowledge. He could be modest on occasion too—as modest as Roberto Carrington making his statement on the election. Leaving off the *o* had been so easy for Carrington. Most people had forgotten, if they ever had known, that the man was not an American at all in any sense in which Josiah was an American.

Carrington's wife left the Club soon after this. But the sight of her however brief gave Josiah the strength to face the harsh music he knew he must face. He could take stock—that was it—as a man might make an inventory of any assets which had once been his and were his no longer. He didn't want to be kidded—eased out of anything gradually. His first care tomorrow would be a series of resignations. His resignations would have to be accepted now. When a year ago he had offered to resign the circumstances had been different. He hadn't personally been to blame. Now the blame was all his own.

Tuesday night, the defeat at the polls, and the following Sunday in the dark and twilight hours before dawn a great fleet of ships came to anchor along a seemingly endless stretch of North African coast. Had it done so a few days sooner more Democrats would have been elected. There were many men who had known it would happen as it did. But these held their peace, accepting their own defeats, facing the chattering and uninformed criticism which—otherwise—might have been smothered,

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and giving no hint. The enemy knew something—it being their business to know—but the enemy were not the voters.

So many of these last had been clamoring for action and not getting it. And now after they had cast their votes in accordance with their frustration they were handed the largest operation of its kind in military history. It wasn't peace or victory, but it justified so much. We could face now the British and the Russians and the harried hordes of China. We could face ourselves. There was a magnificence about the whole accomplishment and its method. And the men who had planned it in silence could look down from their height. Josiah from his depths could see such an eminence only as he might discern the dim high outlines of mountains stretching into the sky. But he still had his hands with their nine fingers and there was much useful work he could re-learn to do.

The Organization didn't want him any more. His value to his fire insurance company was greatly impaired. The civilian defense office accepted a little readily his statement that he would now be more hindrance than help. That commission he had refused in Washington—it probably wasn't available now. And to have re-opened the matter would have been a cheap and face-saving device as things were.

But Josiah had always followed the fate of shoe factories. He regarded shoes and anything pertaining to them with much the same absorbed and knowledgeable eye with which the husband of his sister Lillian regarded automobiles. He had kept somewhere in the full storehouse of his memory the seemingly inconsequent information that the man who had once owned the place

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where he had worked for so many early years was now making shoes for the army. The man had got him angry once, offering him a job not as good as his old when he'd come back from the war—almost as if it were charity. And forgiveness was not among Josiah's virtues. But you could pass over a slight without forgiving it if you had reason enough. The man was a good deal older than Josiah was. He must be quite old now, but war drafted age as well as youth. He didn't look so very old—wizened a bit and a little stooped—but he still had a firm active step and a keen eye and the rather rasping speech of one who must be heard above the whirring of the motors. The two met again as friends of long standing, and with the obvious aura about them of gain on both sides.

The plant was different from the scene of Josiah's boyish labors and many of the methods were new. Though this was a newness Josiah was fully capable of taking into account. He had never liked machinery but you weren't always most useful closest to what you liked. Why, he would get to be a foreman once he had mastered the new ways! He had a long experience in handling people, which wouldn't be for nothing. He'd go higher than a mere foreman once he shook himself into the routine. Meanwhile there were so many special processes which had to be watched. Josiah found himself greatly interested in these. They turned out a better, more comfortable shoe, softer and easier on the feet.

This was a different town from the one which he and Flo had once inhabited, but it seemed extraordinarily familiar. All factory towns were a good deal alike. Though Josiah rather hoped that Flo wouldn't think so,

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because he had it in view to persuade her to come and join him. This was in the future. For the present she was to remain in the city attending to her many interests. There was money enough for that. Josiah wasn't broken financially. It would be too bad to take Flo off just now. It would be hard to see how her various committees could function without her. She had developed quite a talent for that sort of thing. Next thing you knew she'd be in politics. Now that so many men were otherwise occupied, politics might be quite a field for women even in a town like this, which harbored shoe factories.

Well, if Flo decided to see what she could do in that line, Josiah would be in a position to give her considerable advice. It might not be good advice, he thought, his opinion of his own abilities having taken something of a slump. But if you were busy working an eight-hour shift, and time and a half for overtime, the exact value of your advice didn't matter so much. You had already found your own level—which mattered a great deal.

To take stock—that was it—stock of yourself. The seed of the Puritan was as green in Josiah as ever it had been, and he could be as unsparing of himself—as unscrupulous in his own punishment—as he had been in fighting his way through to a point of power he was unfitted to have attained. But what was democracy after all but an untrammelled opportunity to make use of your own individual aptitudes, to make your own mistakes and to retrieve them, to triumph or to fail in accordance with your own deserts?

21.

‘YOU know the President has an office of great power. People don’t realize that. They think what he does is unconstitutional half the time when it isn’t. He’s in a tough spot. My God, he’s in a tough spot!’”

“He’s got us.”

“Our trade-in value’s not so very high just now. But they’ll come and get us—when they can. They’ll send out. I keep thinking it’s Saturday. Seems like Saturday somehow. I guess it’s because it’s so quiet after all the assorted noise. You could get a lot of work done on Saturday when most of the crowd had gone out on their various occasions lawful and unlawful. Then about four or so they’d start to drift in. That court we had ought to be fixed—needed rolling—needed marking. Ought to be rolled after every rain. That’s what I said. If we didn’t watch out we wouldn’t have any court by the end of the term—just a mudhole—like this one—slimy and getting slimier all the time. It’ll be a long dirty job before we’re through. But have you noticed that there aren’t nearly so many Nips around here as there used to be? You can’t always tell. Those mugs can live on a bag of rice and a little perfume for a month and not move a muscle. As for me, I wouldn’t mind moving if I could get anywhere. We were lucky to get this far. I don’t think the Nips have brought in any tanks. I’d hate to be flushed out by a

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tank as if I were a covey of partridges. Say, I bet my leg looks worse than your chest does! If we had some clean wet dressings it would help. We'll be all right when we get to the base. Nice place. Beds. Everything. Take it easy, now. . . .

"You know I'd think I was still down in Florida almost. Except that down there the palm trees are set out all neat in rows. They look from the rear like the legs of elephants, though ending strangely in green feather dusters at the top. And the bright stars and the sudden rains. There was a nice bar in Florida about ten miles out from camp. They called it a cocktail lounge. All the walls and the furnishings were bamboo. It was some place to go anyway—when you could get there. Of course there were a lot of old women there—both sexes—sitting around getting tight and telling tall tales of how they'd given up sugar in their coffee. There was one—she was a grandmother—she used to get tight as a tick. I've seen her lap up five martinis one right after another and then tell the world she wasn't a drinking woman! I could do with a drink now, couldn't you? Five martinis—probably make me sick."

"Two apiece and one to go by."

"That's not so bad, is it? That's one thing about my old man, he doesn't drink. He's all right, though—I don't care what anyone says about him. He didn't make these shoes—at least I don't think he did. I bought them myself, special. Officers' shoes. Fifteen dollars. They wouldn't be worth fifteen dollars now, would they? I'm afraid one of them's not much good any more. I should hate to go around all my life with only one shoe. Oh well, I may not have to. Mother was so set on my getting my

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bars. She couldn't have held her head up if her son had been just a non-com like everyone else. I got them. Did it to please her. Young too. I'm twenty. How old are you?"

"Twenty-eight."

"Practically an old man! She thought it was safer too. Safer—my eye! Second lieuts are about as expendable as they come. Lead your men—protect them at all times—go places where you wouldn't send them. Be ready for all emergencies. That bridge was an emergency, wasn't it? And in use at the time. My own idea—very satisfactory. The Colonel's always throwing up bridges—I guess he doesn't like to swim. Then he had to leave it. My orders were merely to do a sort of reconnaissance. But the damage was a temptation. How do you feel?"

"Not so good."

"Well hold onto your hat. It won't be long now—either way."

"You said it would be—"

"I'm talking about something else now. You don't mind if I talk, do you? Funny thing my talking. My father's such a quiet guy—doesn't believe in talk. People said he was just a typical city politician, but he wasn't—not when you knew him. Don't make any mistake about my father. Politics as usual—that was his trouble—and trying to run things, till he learned he couldn't. He got out when the getting was good. Too bad in a way, though. A very able man. Handsome too. Tall—thin—with a face that looked as if it were cut out of rock—nothing flabby. He's a foreman now. What's the next step up in a shoe factory? Superintendent? No. Something in between. But he'll make it. He'll likely own the

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whole joint before he's through. All the bandits don't wear old clothes and talk out of the sides of their mouths. Oh I don't mean he's like that—he isn't. But he always plays his cards very close to his chest. How's your chest by the way? To me everything seems normal. That's one thing I've found out. You can go through hell and come out the other end and hell seems a place just like any other. I think Bernard Shaw said that once in a play called 'Man and Superman.' I don't mean the Superman of the comic strip. Yes, I've found out a lot I never expected to know—and fast.

"My Uncle Amos—that's my father's brother who teaches school—he wants me to write. Used to get me to write something every day—five hundred words—work it over—then tear it up. Every day. Pick a news item from the paper—don't change anything basic or make use of anything not suggested—news item of not more than six inches—make five hundred words out of that. Then take music—take the classics—Beethoven for instance—musical composition—you take it! They haven't got any good songs in this war, have they? George Cohan—he could turn them out—but George Cohan's dead—it's too bad. A lot of things are too bad. There's that German song—'Lille Marlene'—they have a United Nations version somewhere—North Africa, mostly. No reason why we shouldn't steal from the Germans that I can see. Lille Marlene—she starts out with a private and ends up with a brigadier—they say it's cute. Then there's 'Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree,' 'Pass the Ammunition'—I never can remember songs very well—one or two others. How do you feel?

"They say this isn't a personal war—only mechanized.

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I disagree with that—I disagree with it totally. I think it's extraordinarily personal. Why I've seen Nips so close I could count their teeth, and then I didn't see them any more. The little man who wasn't there. I always wondered how I'd feel if I had to kill a man. I found out. They say killing should be avoided whenever possible—that's the peace-time theory—sometimes it can't be avoided. You pour some lead into a man and he dies. Very simple. With a Nip, dying is supposed to be incidental. Did you know that Japan is the only modern state which has tried to use the mystical concept for national ends? It can't be done, successfully. There aren't enough people who can take it, and the thing goes haywire.

"Say, it's getting damned slimy in here, isn't it? And yet outside it's quite dry. Good old Georgia—I beg its pardon, New Georgia—an island in the Central Solomons, first discovered by Lieutenant Shortland in the year 1788, named after the English king. A dense and mountainous country with jungle extending right down to the shore. Well it's no place I'd come to knowingly and no place I'd go back to—once I get away. It's too near the equator to suit me. And it gets dark too quickly—beginning to now in fact. And in fifteen minutes they can start their night operations which are, of course, heavily weighted by the factor of chance. No more daylight at all—not till tomorrow at almost the same time. We might get out of here right now but I doubt we'd make it—not in the shape we're in. We'd get picked off. And if we wait till dark no knowing what we'd get into. Too much chance. Me—I can take a chance or I can leave it alone.

"Well we got the bridge. It certainly exploded! There

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must have been thirty of them trying to get across. They ought to have used logs. But it was an opportunity to get their supplies over. They didn't have time to jump in the river. Sometimes you don't. Better to stay where you are. They didn't stay anywhere. It's what you're always dreading and telling yourself can't happen. Maybe they felt that way too. I suppose for once we were able to exploit our superiority. The Colonel threw up that bridge for some purpose of his own and then he had to leave it for the Nips. As it happened, it was a piece of cheese in a trap. But from his angle it was a mistake. I hate to have to retrieve the mistakes of other people. My own I don't mind. Retrieve our errors—forgive our sins. . . .

"How do you feel? The artillery on Rendova has helped, hasn't it? I wonder what the score is? I always like to know the score. I feel rather sick. That's odd, because—outside of my eyes which aren't really so bad—I'm awfully healthy. I guess it's my leg. It doesn't look so good, does it? Wow! My mother could fix it. She's good at that sort of thing. I remember when I was a kid I tore my leg getting over a barb-wire fence, and the doctor said if she hadn't treated it just as she did I'd have had quite a time. She's done wonders in so many ways. Of course you have to laugh at her a little when you see her in a uniform. But why shouldn't she wear one if she wants to? She ought to have a drum and some gold braid. She's raised so much money for the Red Cross and the USO and God knows what, it isn't even funny. My father and she don't get on too well. There must be some reason—I've often wondered. It isn't that he isn't good to her—he is. Very good. And he doesn't chase around after other women, so it's not that.

SEED OF THE PURITAN

"Say, did you ever see any of these native women? I did. It was after we landed at Viru. Not very seductive. You think of tropical islands filled up with girls in grass skirts doing the hula. Nothing like that. Maybe in some places but not here. I wish them no harm though. But I'd settle for a freckle and the right shade of lipstick. You see I'm a Yankee like my father. I don't care too much for foreigners. I think that was one reason we turned our back on this job for so long—didn't want to get mixed up with foreigners. We're mixed up all right. Retrieve our errors, if we can. And we will—eventually. We'll have to. That's the Puritan conscience talking. Though I think the Puritans worry too much about themselves—worry about going wrong—think they have when they haven't. It's a complex—mostly inferior. They have nothing to worry about. I should say 'we'. No, we have nothing to worry about.

"Why we have everything—planes—a two- or is it a three-ocean navy by now?—everything—ground troops—supplies. If you ask me, which you didn't. Does your chest hurt much? Can't you hear me? I asked if your chest hurt. Just take it easy—there—that's better. Louder and funnier every minute. Don't worry about me—I can go it alone if I have to. Better give me your gun. Mine's empty. Yours is too, isn't it? No—one shot! There might be a few hand grenades about, but there aren't. Never settle anywhere without hand grenades—

"Do you see what I see? Coming right at us? Well if I miss it will be too bad."

THE END

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